

**Reflection on the Gospel-30th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
(Mark 10:46-52)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

What is it that we fail to see? Today's gospel reading brings to closure a long section of Mark's gospel that focuses on the journey of Jesus and his disciples from Caesarea Philippi in the north to Jericho in the south. Jericho is the final staging point in the journey to Jerusalem where the final act of the gospel drama will be played out. This section of the gospel (8:27-10:52) is prefaced by the story of a blind man who comes to sight in stages and ends with the story of another blind man, Bartimaeus, who comes from blindness to sight, as well as from insight to greater insight, and joins Jesus on the journey to Jerusalem. On the intervening journey, Jesus endeavours to lead the Twelve out of their metaphorical blindness into an understanding of what it means to follow a suffering messiah. They remain for some time in their blindness, as subsequent events will demonstrate.

The narrator creates an impression of urgency at this point in Mark's gospel. "They" come to Jericho and then leave. The intervention of Bartimaeus, who tries to attract the attention of Jesus by calling out from the roadside, threatens to delay the journey. When he cries out for mercy, many "rebuke" him. This is a strong word. It is used of people in the crowd who neither share the depth of Bartimaeus' faith nor grasp the nature of Jesus' mission of gathering in "the remnant of Israel, among them the blind and the lame" (Jeremiah 31:8). Those who try to silence Bartimaeus are a bit like the family of Jesus who tried to protect him from himself (Mark 3:31).

When it is clear that the perception of the "many" is not shared by Jesus, we have an almost comical scene in which they do a complete about-face. It seems they want to please the authority figure no matter what. Bartimaeus offers a stark contrast to these people. He knows that Jesus has the power to bring the mercy of God into his life and the lives of those who wait by the roadside with faith in their hearts. He receives the assurance from Jesus that his faith has made him well.

We can probably find some reflection of ourselves in all the characters in today's story. At times we are aware of our blindness and wait desperately by the roadside for the right person or circumstances to come along and give us the heart to rise up and live the journey of faith. At times, we are like the many who think we know what is best for others and who try to silence the voices of those who interfere with our plans. At other times, we respond to the cries for mercy and stretch out our hands to gather in those whose disabilities might otherwise exclude them.