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## ***The Blind Man Speaks Up!***

***by: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio***



There were hundreds in the crowd that day at Jericho. No doubt all of them had needs, many of them urgent. But this Sunday's gospel tells us that only one of them apparently had the audacity to speak up and ask for help from the prophet that everyone had come to see.

The man happened to be a blind beggar, the son of a man named Timaeus. Bartimaeus probably did not know that the celebrity, as our second reading tells us, was the great high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who was appointed by God to take away the sins of the world. It's likely too, that he did not know that this Jesus was the Son of God, the incarnate

Word, equal to the Father.

But in the few words he spoke, as recorded in the Gospel, we see that he did believe several important things about this VIP. First, by calling him "Son of David" he was indicating his faith that Jesus was the messiah, the king destined to revive the fortunes of Israel and fulfill the legacy of the shepherd boy who delivered Israel from the scourge of its enemies. He also evidently believed that this teacher (whom he called "*Rabbouni*") had the power to rid him of his own *personal* scourge—blindness. This was a power that neither the kings nor the rabbis of Israel possessed.

So Bartimaeus had faith in Jesus. And he received the miracle he so ardently desired. Jesus told him that it was his faith, in fact, that saved him.

But it was not silent convictions alone that would have done the trick. No, had he just believed quietly, the man who everyone was making a fuss about would have walked right by him.

The saving faith that Bartimaeus had was faith that ***speaks up and acts up***. Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospel that he who asks, receives. He tells parables about seemingly rude widows and neighbors who make a nuisance of themselves, persistently asking for what they want and finally getting it.



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Maybe Bartimaeus heard these words of Jesus on another occasion. Or maybe he simply knew this by instinct and the promptings of grace. If he really believed that Jesus could do anything, why would he fail to allow the Rabbi to pass him by without fulfilling his urgent need? **Carpe Diem!**

Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) makes it clear that if faith is humble and receptive, it is **not** demure, shy, or reticent. Faith takes initiative. It can actually be boisterous, even outrageous at times. He can't see exactly where Jesus is and so can't walk right up to him to present his request in a dignified, semi-private manner. So he uses what he has—his voice. He makes a scene. The more people tell him to be quiet, the louder he shouts. And when he finally got Jesus' attention and was summoned, the text says he eagerly leapt to his feet.

As I read this story, I'm tempted to think "if I'd have been there, with the Lord Jesus standing there in front of me, I'd have spoken up as well."



Well, every Sunday I'm confronted with the real and true presence of the same One who healed Bartimaeus. For in the Eucharist, the sacrament of sacraments, it is not just God's grace (which is awesome enough) but Christ's bodily presence which is made available. Guaranteed.

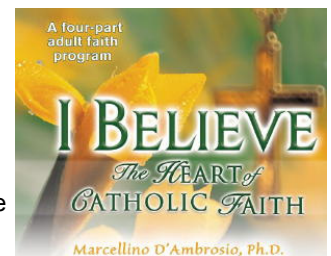
So why do so many of us go to Mass again and again and walk out the door much the same as we went in? Why so little healing, so little growth in holiness? Maybe because we lack the outrageous faith of Bartimaeus. Every sacramental celebration, especially the Eucharist, says the Catechism (CCC 739, 1106), is a new Pentecost. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, healing, purification, guidance, all are there for the taking. We don't need to shout like Bartimaeus. But like him, we can determine to stop going home empty handed.

*This was originally published in the October 29, 2006 edition of Our Sunday Visitor as a reflection upon the readings for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B (Jer 31:7-9; Heb 5:1-6; Mk 10:46-52). It is reproduced here with the permission of the author.*

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