

## Reflection for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Are you a planner? Are you focused? Can you adapt? Today in our Gospel reading we hear of Jesus leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd. Can you picture the scene in your mind the Messiah, the savior of the world, is leaving town and people are not only looking out their windows to see him, but they are also standing outside their homes and places of business, people are even standing on their roofs to see Jesus and His followers? They are not disappointed not only does Jesus, pass by with His disciples but a sizable crowd follows. This event is something that will be talked about for generations to come in Jericho. Jesus and his disciples when they reach Jericho were still another eighteen miles from their destination, Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that in these final eighteen miles the elevation will change 3,382.57 feet. The elevation of Jerusalem is 2,557.26 feet and the elevation of Jericho is -825.31 feet. Of course, this information about the change in elevation was discovered on google, so it might not be completely correct. The information about the distance between Jericho and Jerusalem is taken from an article by the American Bible Society which states, "Although Jericho is northeast of Jerusalem, travelers go down to Jericho. The Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 37-93) explained that the first-century road was approximately one hundred and fifty Roman stadii, or about eighteen miles long." Due to the difference of elevation between Jericho and Jerusalem these two places are very different. Jerusalem receives about twenty inches of rain a year and its climate can be describe as Mediterranean. Jericho on the other hand has a climate that is more African in orientation and the area only receives eight inches of rain a year. Jericho due to the fact that it has a permanent water source called Elisha's Spring, it is an oasis in the middle of a desert. It is also important to note that in the time of Jesus the road between Jericho and Jerusalem was often referred to as the "Way of Blood" because of the blood that was shed by the victims of the robbers that lived in the area.

As Jesus and His disciples prepared to travel on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem on the "Way of Blood" Jesus had already shared His prediction of His passion, not once but three times. So, knowing that they were heading to Jerusalem the place of Christ's death and resurrection it is natural to understand that all who were present were in a somber and quiet mood. It is in this quiet and somber moment that Bartimaeus, a blind man, sitting by the side of the road that leads to Jerusalem cries out in a loud voice "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." The crowd that was standing near Bartimaeus tried to silence him for his outburst just seems improper at that time. Bartimaeus for his part just cries out all the louder "Son of David, have pity on me." We then hear in the Gospel how Jesus reacts, He says just two words, "call him." The crowd that was trying to silence Bartimaeus informs him "take courage, get up, Jesus is calling you." The blind man then makes his way towards Jesus and once in front of Jesus, Bartimaeus in asked, "what do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus just says four words to Christ, and these four words change his life forever, "Master, I want to see." This request is granted, and Bartimaeus follows Jesus Christ on the way.

At the start of the reflection there are three questions. In our Gospel reading see we how the actions and words of Bartimaeus answers these questions. Are you a planner? The day that Jesus left Jericho for Jerusalem, Bartimaeus clearly had a plan, he was sitting on the side of the road with the crowd standing around him. He was waiting for the moment that he could cry out for Jesus, so that Christ would come to him and help him. Are you focused? The blind man was clearly focused, the crowd tried to silence him, but he is focused and determined not allowing the crowd to change his plans. Can you adapt? Bartimaeus had a plan for Jesus to come to him and give him physical sight. But Jesus asked Bartimaeus to come before Him, and Jesus gave him not only physical sight but spiritual sight and the blind man who could see followed Jesus on the way. The encounter that Bartimaeus had with Jesus Christ outside the walls of Jericho changed his life forever. Today we have the same opportunity to encounter Christ in the Eucharist and in Sacred Scriptures and with the grace of Jesus Christ experience a permanent change.