

“Take courage, get up!”

In his 11 June general audience, Pope Leo XIV continued his catechetical cycle on Jesus Christ, our hope, speaking about the healing of Bartimaeus.

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Dear brothers and sisters,

With this catechesis I would like to bring our attention to another essential aspect of the life of Jesus, namely his *healings*. For this reason,

I invite you to bring before the Heart of Christ your most painful and fragile parts, those places in your life where you feel stuck and blocked. Let us trustfully ask the Lord to listen to our cry, and to heal us!

The character who accompanies us in this reflection will help us to understand that we must never give up hope, even when we feel lost. He is Bartimaeus, a blind man and a beggar, whom Jesus meets in Jericho (cf. *Mk* 10:46-52). The place is significant: Jesus is going to Jerusalem, but he begins his journey, so to speak, in the “underworld” of Jericho, a city situated below sea level. Indeed, Jesus, with his death, went to take back that Adam who fell to the bottom and who represents each one of us.

Bartimaeus means “son of Timaeus”: the man is described through a relationship, and yet he is

dramatically alone. This name, though, could also mean “son of honour” or “of admiration,” exactly the opposite of the situation in which he finds himself. (This is the interpretation also given by Augustine in *The Harmony of the Gospels*, 2, 65, 125: *PL* 34, 1138.) And since the name is so important in Jewish culture, it means that Bartimaeus fails to live up to what he is called to be.

Then, unlike the great movement of people who walk behind Jesus, Bartimaeus is still. The Evangelist says that he is sitting by the roadside, and so he needs someone to lift him up onto his feet and help him resume his journey.

What can we do when we find ourselves in a situation that seems to have no way out? Bartimaeus teaches us to appeal to the resources we have within us and which form a

part of us. He is a beggar, he knows how to ask, indeed, he can shout! If you truly want something, you do everything in order to be able to reach it, even when others reproach you, humiliate you and tell you to let it be. If you really desire it, you keep on shouting!

The cry of Bartimaeus, in the Gospel of Mark – “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!” (v. 47) – has become a very well-known prayer in the Eastern tradition, which we too can use: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have pity on me, a sinner.”

Bartimaeus is blind, but paradoxically he sees better than the others, and he recognizes who Jesus is! Before his cry, Jesus stops and has him called (cf. 49), because there is no cry that God does not hear, even when we are not aware we are addressing him (cf. *Ex 2:23*). It seems strange that, in front of a blind man,

Jesus does not go immediately to him; but, if we think about it, it is the way to reactivate Bartimaeus' life: He spurs him to get up again, He trusts in his ability to walk. That man can get up on his feet again, he can rise from the throes of death. But in order to do this, he must perform a very meaningful gesture: he must throw away his cloak (cf. v. 50)!

For a beggar, the cloak is everything: it is his safety, it is his house, it is the defence that protects him. Even the law protected the beggar's cloak, and imposed that it be returned in the evening if taken as a pledge (cf. *Ex 22:25*). And yet, many times, it is precisely our apparent securities that stand in our way – what we have put on to defend ourselves and which instead prevent us from walking. To go to Jesus and let himself be healed, Bartimaeus must show himself to Him in all his vulnerability. This is

the fundamental step in any journey of healing.

Even the question that Jesus asks him seems strange: “What do you want me to do for you?” (v.51). But, in reality, it is not given that we want to be healed from our ailments; at times we prefer to stay still so as not to take responsibility. Bartimaeus’ reply is profound: he uses the verb *anablepein*, which can mean “to see again,” but which we can also translate as “to look up.” Indeed, Bartimaeus does not want only to see again; he wants to regain his dignity! To look up, we must raise our heads. At times people are stuck because life has humiliated them, and they just want to find their worth again.

What saves Bartimaeus, and each one of us, is faith. Jesus heals us so that we can become free. He does not invite Bartimaeus to follow him, but tells him to go, to set out on his way

(cf. v.52). However, Mark concludes the story by saying that Bartimaeus began to follow Jesus: he freely chose to follow Him, He who is the Way!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us trustfully bring our ailments before Jesus, and also those of our loved ones; let us bring the pain of those who feel lost and without a way out. Let us cry out for them too, and we will be certain that the Lord will hear us and stop.

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