

Homily. Monday 15 November.

Dear brothers, the Gospel we have just heard describes the arrival of Jesus in Jericho. It is the last stop before going up to Jerusalem. The blind man and Jesus are the central characters of the story. The former, excluded, by the roadside like a beggar. His presence and especially his cry makes the people accompanying Jesus uncomfortable, annoyed. The blind man was a dead man in life, separated from the crowd, while many pass by. It is encouraging that the blind man comes out of the darkness and joins the way. Some tried to silence his cry, but he cried out louder: Son of David, have mercy on me. The blind man is a symbol of a discipleship that is not limited to anonymity but demands that the God of Jesus brings him into the community. Today too, the cry of the poor, the migrants, the sick, the beggars, the refugees, makes the established society, the established order, the status quo, the non-synodal Church uncomfortable. We, who have our charismatic origin among them, are often disturbed by these cries, and we silence them by giving bread or money.

Jesus turns to the blind man and asks him: What do you want me to do for you? The Son of God now stands before the blind man as a humble servant. It is as if to say: How would you have me serve you? God becomes the servant of sinful man. The blind man no longer calls him Son of David, but Lord, the name that the Church from the beginning applies to the Risen Jesus. The blind man, thanks to faith, can now see... your sight is restored, your faith has saved you. He continued to glorify him; he became a disciple. From beggar to disciple. We, too, are blind beggars, and we always need salvation and to form community, to be an open, supportive, evangelising and contemplative Fraternity.

At times it seems that our hearts and minds are anaesthetised so that nothing hurts us. But the loud cry of that blind and marginalised man could not be silenced, and his request to see is a powerful cry for help for those who today are often invisible. In this scene, Jesus listens, amidst the crowd's shouting, to the plea of the one who can only cry out. In this way, the story unites the cry and the need with Jesus' attention and merciful response.

Following Jesus is not easy. It requires a new light that can bring all people out of anonymity to live faith in the Nazarene and in Community. All the miracles of Jesus require faith put into action. When the community wants to silence you because you are different, make you invisible to your brothers, or tell you that you are not worthy, imitate the blind man. Ask, recognise Jesus as your saviour and cry out with all your heart so that you may have access to the Jesus' offer that is given to all. I highlight an interesting detail. The evangelist says that someone in the crowd explained to the blind man the reason for all those people, saying: Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. When Jesus passes by, there is always deliverance, and there is always salvation. It is as if the blind man had his Passover announced to him. More than once, the blind man cries out to Jesus, recognising him as the Son of David, the awaited Messiah who would open the eyes of the blind.

In the last three years of his earthly life, our brother Francis suffered from a worsening of his eyes and spent a brief time at San Damiano with St. Clare and the sisters. Almost blind, he composed most of the Canticle of the Creatures, a song of praise to the Lord for the beauty of his creatures. Blind and configured to the God who gives wisdom to see with the soul.

Today, there are cries for peace, cries for greater humanity, cries for justice, for good health for all, cries for good education, cries for water, cries for the end of Covid 19... cries for reconciliation and fraternity, etc. What are the cries within the Church, in our fraternities...? May the Lord give us the grace to listen to them, as Jesus did to the blind man of Jericho, making commitments so that the Kingdom of God may advance and be manifested.