

Gospel Luke 18:35-43

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by..."



John has been coming to volunteer at the mission for a while now. More than two months. He comes with his mother, twice a week. At times, if there are different events taking place, they come several times. They joined Br Luke last Saturday to participate in the play that was presented at the nursing home. They both changed their schedule in order to be there for the events. John is legally blind. He can hardly see anything. He needs to be accompanied at all times. He needs someone to walk him to the chapel or to the table where he is about to work. John is always ready to ask questions and to engage in any conversation. He has a joyful longing for human interaction. He is patient and kind. He remembers people even though he cannot not distinguish their faces and he recognizes them by the tone of their voices. In his presence you always feel welcome because he is literally happy to talk to you. He receives anything that his mother brings to him. He never argues with her and he shows no preferences when it comes to food she shares with him or cookies at tea time. The only no he says is to the morning tea because he likes coffee. Like in the gospel, he would also like to see better. His mother has the same hope for him. She prays for that. Since they came to the mission their situation did not change. One thing that changed, one might notice, is that there are many things that John can do at the mission now. Thanks to Br Luke, Jacob and Ozzy who work with him and all the community. He is active, making cookies or cutting butter, together with other volunteers at the table. This week, his mom could not stay with him on Wednesday. She had a medical emergency. John spent all the day with us, being accompanied by different volunteers. He brought a lot of energy around him. Many people who used to pass by before, would now stop to offer him help, take him to the washroom or to the working table, bring him coffee or just to talk to him. They also brought him in the chapel for prayer and prayed with him. It is the prayer that John likes the most at the mission. He would ask you when would it start, especially if he feels the time for it is drawing near. Some days he would be the first to get inside the chapel and wait for people to come and prayer to start. "What do you like to do here the most John?" "To pray in the chapel together with other people", he replies. "Can you read the prayer John?" "I cannot read, but I pray in my head." Anyone who sees him in the chapel during prayer time can see that he speaks the truth.

Antiphon 1. Mode pl. 2.

I lift my eyes to You in heaven, O Logos. Show me mercy, so that I may live in You.

The joyful longing for human presence that we see in John is genuine and this is what gives boldness to the blind man, in the gospel today, to cry for God. He knows what it means to rely

on others. He is asking them to tell him what is going on. He relies on others with many things, he is a beggar who cannot see. He cannot do much on his own, except perhaps to pray in his mind, just like John, and he loves prayer beyond anything else. That's one thing for which he does not need to rely on anybody else. But even then, for the sake of people, he prays rather with others than just by himself. The longing for human presence, the experience of relying on others for small and essential things, and prayer (that we know from John) gives to the blind man the faith to call for God. He has relied on others all his life, now he can ask Christ directly. He prayed in his heart, now he can touch His hands. He was longing for human presence, now God is present to Him.

Christ was passing by ... he was on the path of the cross to Jerusalem. At times we can have this experience of God passing by us, while His face is oriented towards something else. That something else is the cross. There is a time when Christ looks at us in the eye. Like under the fig tree, when He saw Nathaniel. And then there is a time when he is passing by us, because he is going to the cross. And then a time when we look at Him together because He looks at us from the cross. And a time when we see Him, but we don't know if He is the gardener or not. And then a time when some would pretend they are Him, making us look here or there, distracting us. And there is the final time when God will reveal Himself to all: "I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked .. And you saw me ..."

This is what the blind man is praying for. To see Him. To see Christ. This is what vision is for precisely. To see Him in all things. To see His countenance. To see His mercy because the blind man lived at the mercy of people. Because His mercy is better than life. It is the mercy of God that gives sight to the human heart. So the heart can see Christ by itself. Where He is going, when He is coming and when He is passing by. To see Him with mercy when He hangs upon the cross. And not to condemn Him. It is His mercy that opens the eyes of our heart. To see Him in all things and in the broken humanity today.

What is the blind man going to do now? Will he still rely on others, will he still pray within his mind, will he still long for the presence of a human heart? Or will he just be sufficient by himself? Would seeing Christ once be enough? Would it be enough to receive His mercy that opens the eyes of the heart?

The blind man glorifies God. Glorifying God means, as we know, that man is fully alive. The blind man has become fully alive, having all his senses and all his mind to love God and the neighbour whom he relied upon, like himself. A blessed life that was lifted up by the mercy of God does not become self-sufficient but mercy for others because now he can see Christ in everyone.

Christ is passing by ... It feels today that Christ is passing by and we don't find the voice to cry to Him. He is passing by and the world is silenced by the self-sufficiency that blinds our eyes. He is

passing by and we are mute because we have lost the longing for the presence of the other and the prayer of the mind that silenced our thoughts and changed our mind. All week, in the scripture, Jesus was rebuked by the Pharisees. Today He turns His face towards Jerusalem to enter into the depths of the earth. He is stopped for a little while by the one who wants to see God. Who wants to see Him. Who calls Him “Son of David”. The voice that bears witness to the Son of God is the voice that is born out of the longing for the presence of the other, by the prayer of the heart and from the vulnerability of living at the mercy of others. With the good and bad that comes with it. And ascetical practice that teaches the human heart what it lacks: the mercy of God. That gives to the soul vision to see. If we lack one of the things that help us see Christ as He is passing by us, on the way of the cross, at the mission, we ask John to teach us. Taking time to be with John, is like taking time to be with Christ, it is like taking time to be with all in whom Christ is. In all and for all.