

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus is on His way up to Jerusalem. He knows that the cross is waiting for Him. But on the way there, He has to pass through the city of Jericho on one of the main roads. While in Jericho, Jesus passes a blind man begging on the side of the road. Being blind meant that there was not much else he could do in those days. There was no way for him to work to make a living. There was no such thing as welfare to take care of his needs. All that he could do was beg and hope that someone would have pity on him by giving him some kind of help, whether money or food. Being a blind man meant that he led a very hard and difficult life.

This blind man hears a crowd passing by on the road. After all, Jesus rarely traveled alone. Very large crowds often went with Him from place to place, and He also had many disciples. But when the blind man asks the crowd what was happening, they tell him that Jesus is passing by. And the crowd probably didn't think anything of it. They answered his question, maybe gave him a little money or food, and moved on. They had no idea what was about to happen next.

Hearing that Jesus is near, the blind man begins to shout and to make a scene. In Luke chapter 18, verse 38, he shouts at the top of his lungs: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He keeps shouting and yelling in a way that was annoying to those around him. And the crowd tries to get him to be quiet. "Stop making so much noise!" they say. "Can't you see how foolish you're being? There's no reason to do this. Be quiet!" But this makes him shout even louder than before: "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Why is he doing this? Because he wants to make sure that Jesus hears him. He knows that Jesus can help him. He believes in Jesus, and he will not be silenced or denied. This blind man is persistent, refusing to let the crowds silence him. He knows that Jesus will hear him, because he knows who Jesus is. And the blind man was right. Jesus hears him and commands that the blind man be brought to him. And when the blind man asks Jesus to give him back his sight, Jesus answers his prayer. He opens the eyes of the blind man, just as he knew that he would. He persistently called out to Jesus, trusting that Jesus would have mercy on him and help him in all his troubles.

Christians, would you describe your faith as persistent? Do you seek after Jesus, no matter what the world says or does? Do you keep going after Him, even when everything seems to be against you? Because there are many things in this world which want to make us be quiet. And all of these things crowd around us, telling us to just give up and stop making a scene. What do you do in that case? Do you give up and just do what the crowd says? Or do you hold on and keep calling out to Jesus, just like that blind man in Jericho?

Are you persistent in prayer? Do you keep praying to God, calling on Him, no matter what? Because there are many things in this world which want to make us be quiet, to make us stop praying or even to never pray at all. Satan, for example, does everything that he can to get us to not pray. Satan wants us to be quiet so that we won't turn to God in the midst of our troubles. He wants us to not pray so that we lose hope and turn away from God. Satan is never harder at work than when he convinces us to do something other than pray! But he's not the only thing that wants us to be quiet. Our own sin fights against us. It says to us: "You're too busy for prayer. You have more important things to do right now. You can get back to it later, when you're not so busy. Right now, you need to do this or that." But how often do we actually remember to pray later? And our sin also leads us to be impatient. It says to us: "Didn't you already ask God for this? Why hasn't He answered yet? God must be too busy for you. God must not want to do this for you. There's no use in praying about it. Just give up and be quiet." All of these things

crowd around us, telling us to just give up and stop making a scene. Be quiet! Don't pray! Jesus doesn't have time for you.

But God wants us to not lose heart. Keep praying! Be persistent in prayer! After all, God has promised to hear you when you pray. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." He also says in John chapter 15: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." We can pray knowing that God will hear us, without fail, without doubt. So be persistent. Be obnoxious! Make yourself annoying to God, coming back to Him again and again. Because God loves to hear us pray. He will answer us. Even if we have to pray a hundred times, He will answer us. God is our loving Father, and He will have mercy on us, just as He had mercy on that blind man in Jericho.

Christians, are you persistent in speaking the truth? Are you persistent in telling others about Jesus? Because there are many things in this world which want to make us be quiet, to make us never speak up or say anything at all. Satan tries to convince us to keep our faith hidden. Don't let anyone know that you are a Christian! What will they think about you? What will they say? But our own sin does this too. It says to us: "Don't say anything to them. You'll probably do more harm than good. They'll probably get angry, and it won't change anything anyway. And even if they do listen, they won't do anything about it. It all depends on you, and you'll probably do something wrong. So just be quiet. There's no use in trying. It's better to say nothing at all." All of these things crowd around us, telling us to just give up and stop making a scene. Be quiet! Don't say anything! What good will it do anyway?

But God wants us to speak. Be persistent! Be bold in telling the truth about Jesus! After all, God has promised to be with us whenever we speak for Him. Jesus says in Luke chapter 10: "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." He also says in Matthew chapter 10: "What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." We can speak knowing that God is with us, that He will use us to carry out His will. So be persistent. Speak the truth in love. After all, our words may be the very reason why God brings that person to faith or brings them to repentance. Speak without fear. God is our loving Father, and He will have mercy on us, just as He had mercy on that blind man in Jericho.

Lastly, Christians, are you persistent in the midst of suffering? Are you patient in that suffering? Because there are many things in this world which want to make us lose heart, to make us not be persistent through it. Satan tries to make us think that our suffering is pointless. Why hold on? What's the use? He can even try to convince us that our suffering is unique. No one has ever suffered as much as you, so why should you be patient? But our own sin also tries to make us stumble. It says to us: "It's no use being patient. If you just give in on this or that, then it will come to an end. Why go through it anymore? And besides, how long will it go on? Will it ever come to an end? God is far off. He doesn't want to do anything about it. So just give up. There's no point in suffering anymore." All of these things crowd around us, telling us to just give up and stop making a scene. Why bother? Why not just give in? What good will it do anyway?

But God wants us to hold on through all our suffering. Be persistent! Endure these things as good soldiers of Christ! After all, God has promised to reward us when all of this suffering is over. Jesus says in Revelation chapter 2: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." He also says in Matthew chapter 10: "The one who endures to the end will be saved." We can suffer knowing that God will care for us, knowing that our suffering is not in vain. So be

persistent. Don't give up! Suffering as a Christian means that we are becoming like Jesus in all things. And remember, Christians, after Jesus suffered, He entered into eternal glory. Our suffering will also come to an end. Even if we have to suffer for years, what is that in comparison with eternity? Heaven waits for those who endure in Jesus Christ. So be patient and hold on. God is our loving Father, and He will have mercy on us, just as He had mercy on that blind man in Jericho.

Therefore, be persistent, Christians. Don't let anything or anyone keep you away from God. Be like that blind man and shout for Jesus. Make a scene if you have to! Because Jesus will hear you, just as He has promised, and Jesus will answer you. He will never fail you. Call on Him and be persistent, because He will have mercy on you today.