

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday, 24 October 2021



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer:
For refugees, victims of persecution and violence, and
for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission
Keynote: Jesus saves us by the light of faith

Prophet Jeremiah 31: 7-9

Here we have a joyful proclamation of the end of suffering for Israel, as the prophet is announcing the return to God's fatherly care and the new covenant. *'Shout with joy for Jacob! Proclaim! Praise! Shout: "The Lord has saved his people..."* Sadly, too often, we see the familiar images on our television screens, of refugees fleeing from flood, war or drought. Here in contrast, we have the image in this prophecy of a great and joyful homeward return. Now is the time of deliverance, now the caring hand of God will *'gather them from the far ends of the earth; all of them: the blind and the lame, women with child, women in labour: a great company returning.'* The prophet utters the promise of God: *'I will comfort them'* the Lord says, *'as I lead them back; I will guide them to streams of water, by a smooth path where they will not stumble.'*

Responsorial Psalm 125 (126): 1-6

The joyful song of the returning exiles, and those who have worked the harvest

Letter to the Hebrews 5: 1-6

Continuing with the explanation of the priesthood of Jesus, and comparing it with the Temple priesthood of the Jews, the author of this letter reminds us, *'No one takes this honour upon himself, but each one is called by God.'* Both the faithful Christian and the faithful priest need to become deeply aware of the fragility of their humanity and of their own human weakness. The Christian priest *'is appointed to act for men (and women) in their relationship with God... and so can sympathise with those who are ignorant or uncertain for he himself lives in the limitations of weakness.'* It is a priesthood of humble service, and like that of Melchizedek, it is forever.

Gospel according to Mark 10: 46-52

As so often Mark sets the events described as part of a journey with Jesus. The shout of the blind beggar at the roadside alerts us: *'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!'* Note how, now healed, the blind man: Bartimaeus joins Jesus, and follows him along the road. Is the evangelist telling us something about faith, about what might happen when we meet the Lord? Typical of the evangelist Mark, the narrative is full of significant detail. For Bartimaeus, is the son of Timaeus and known to the community, and we are told he throws off his cloak when he is called and he says: *'Master, let me see again!'* Such details suggest this account comes from someone who was present on the day.

We, as we reflect on this narrative, might see it just as a simple healing event – a miracle story, or we might also discern a deeper meaning. The Lord calling out to us to have courage, to have faith, and then we too, shall be able see, to understand and to follow along the way of Jesus. Mark would have us understand that the disciples' journey leads to Jerusalem where they and we become witnesses to the death of Jesus and to the Resurrection.