Bartimaeus
(From Conversation with God, Fernandez Carvajal)

The Gospel of today's Mass tells the story of Jesus curing the blind beggar called Bartimaeus. The Master is leaving Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. This is when Bartimaeus makes his immortal appeal: "When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say, Son of David, have pity on me." This man, who lived in complete darkness, had a tremendous desire for light, for clarity, for a cure. He sensed that this was his moment. How long he had been waiting for this opportunity! The Master had come within range of his voice! Many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder. He could not miss this chance. What a wonderful example for us to follow! For Christ is always within range of our voice, of our prayer. He is passing close by us so that we will not be afraid to call to him. St Augustine comments: "He feared that Jesus would pass by and never return." We cannot neglect any opportunity for divine grace.

We should call to Jesus forcefully - even in the depths of our soul: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me! Let us make the following words of St Bernard our very own: "My only merit is the mercy of the Lord. I will never lack any merit as long as He is merciful. And since the mercy of the Lord is superabundant, then superabundant are my merits." We go to him with these merits. St Augustine teaches that we should call out to Jesus with our prayer and good works. These works include acts of charity, professional work well done, purity of soul after a contrite confession of our sins.

The blind man overcame the obstacles of his environment and obtained his heart's desire. Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they called the blind man. "Courage they said, get up; he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak he jumped up and went to Jesus.

The Lord had heard the cries of Bartimaeus from the start. But He wanted the blind beggar to give us a graphic example of perseverance in prayer. Finally, he finds himself before the Lord. "And now begins a dialogue with God, a marvellous dialogue that moves us and sets our hearts on fire, for you and I are now Bartimaeus. Christ who is God, begins to speak and asks, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man answers, 'Lord, that I may see.' How utterly logical! And how about yourself? Can you really see? Haven't you too experienced at times what happened to the blind man of Jericho? I can never forget how, when meditating on this passage many years back, and realising that Jesus was expecting something of me, though I myself did not know what it was, I made up my own aspirations: Lord, what is it you want? What are you asking of me? I had a feeling that he wanted me to take on something new and the cry, Master, that I may see, moved me to beseech Christ again and again. Lord, whatever it is that you wish, let it be done. It is now to you that Christ is speaking. He asks you, What is it you want of me? That I may see. Then Jesus answers, 'Go your way; your faith has saved you.' And all at once he recovered his sight and followed Jesus on his way. You have understood what Our Lord was asking from you and you have decided to accompany him on his way. You are trying to walk in his footsteps, to clothe yourself in Christ's clothing to be Christ himself: well, your faith, your faith is

the light Our Lord is giving you, must be both operative and full of sacrifice." (Saint Josemaría)