

30 (B)

A partially deaf lad was given a note by his teacher to give to his mother, suggesting that she take him out of school, because he was too slow to learn. The mother's reaction was to set to it, and begin teaching him herself. The boy grew up, and Thomas Edison, for that was his name, left a wealth of inventions that leaves us all deeply in his debt.

The people in today's gospel were a bit like that teacher. They wanted to silence the blind man, Bartimaeus, and all because he was creating a scene by calling out in desperation to Jesus for healing. At that time, blindness, or any incapacity, were considered to be due payment for the person's sins. Even families disowned such members. Hence, Bartimaeus was reduced to begging for a living. But Jesus turned this manner of thinking on its head.

In another incident in John's Gospel where a man was born blind the people asked Jesus: "Who sinned, this man or his parents for him to have been born blind". Much to their surprise Jesus was vehement that neither he nor his parents had sinned". He told them bluntly that it was their eyes which needed to be opened.

Occasionally we see on the news where vulnerable people in care homes have been physically and mentally abused. Today we rarely see blind beggars sitting by the wayside but we may not be as tolerant as we should be towards those with a physical or mental disability. You remember a couple of years ago where this disabled woman and her daughter felt so downhearted because of persistent taunting by local hooligans that they sadly ended their lives. On the other hand most would agree that overall there is a greater understanding in our day towards the disabled than say two generations ago. Our new hall extension, for instance, and all public amenities by law, must provide facilities for those with any incapacity. We've come a long way in the last fifty years.

At times concern for a person must move beyond the safe and comfortable and reach people whose presence may make them feel uncomfortable. As Christians we need to see the face of Jesus in everyone especially in those who carry the cross of incapacity whether it be physical or mental or whatever. To a certain extent incapacity applies to everyone. We're all a bit broken and let's not pretend otherwise. I hate the expression 'dysfunctional family'. It seems to suggest that there are some which are not. Tarry rush

Jesus could have gone along with the crowd in scolding the blind man for creating a scene and making a public nuisance of himself. On the contrary He heard his heartfelt cries and gave him back his sight. When we cry out to him with the same intensity as Bartimaeus he'll hearken to our needs as well.