

Commentary on Readings for Sunday, October 26, 2003
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The readings for Sunday, Oct. 26, speak of salvation, salvation hoped for and announced in Jeremiah, partially realized in the psalm, and symbolized as taking place in the Gospel. Jer 30-31 announces the great joy of the return from exile in Babylon; the weary people (with the blind and the lame), who left in tears, will return in joy, for God will console them. The responsorial psalm both recalls that joy and prays for the real end of the exile, since the return to the Promised Land did not bring the end of suffering.

The reading from Hebrews deals with the efficacious sacrifice of Christ, which finally brought us salvation (Heb 5:9; 7:25; 9:28). Like the Old Testament priests, who were human, Jesus can sympathize with our weakness. Unlike them, however, Christ is God's Son and a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, greater than Abraham and the Levitical priests (Heb 7-9). Christ's sacrifice was once and for all, unlike that of the Old Testament which was repeated every year (Heb 7:27; 9:12, 26; 10:10).

When the Messiah (or the messianic age) came, it was expected that the blind would see and the lame walk (Isa 35; Matt 11:2-6). The healing of Bartimaeus by Jesus in Jericho, on the way to his passion in Jerusalem, is the fulfillment of the salvation long-awaited by Israel. This healing, like others (Mark 1:40-42; 5:34; cf. 6:5-6), comes about through faith in Jesus, the Son God sent at last (Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6).