

The Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 9, 2018

Reading 1: Isaiah 35: 4-7a

Thus says the LORD:
Say to those whose hearts are frightened:
Be strong, fear not!
Here is your God,
he comes with vindication;
with divine recompense
he comes to save you.
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,
the ears of the deaf be cleared;
then will the lame leap like a stag,
then the tongue of the mute will sing.
Streams will burst forth in the desert,
and rivers in the steppe.
The burning sands will become pools,
and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

Reading 2: James 2: 1-5

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality
as you adhere to the faith
in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.
For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes
comes into your assembly,
and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in,
and you pay attention
to the one wearing the fine clothes
and say, "Sit here, please,"
while you say to the poor one,
"Stand there," or "Sit at my feet,"
have you not made distinctions among yourselves
and become judges with evil designs?

Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.
Did not God choose those who are poor in the world
to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom
that he promised to those who love him?

Responsorial: Psalm 146

Praise the Lord, my soul!

The God of Jacob keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

The fatherless and the widow the LORD sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations.
Alleluia.

Gospel: Mark 7: 31-37

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre
and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee,
into the district of the Decapolis.
And people brought to him
a deaf man who had a speech impediment
and begged him to lay his hand on him.
He took him off by himself away from the crowd.
He put his finger into the man's ears
and, spitting, touched his tongue;
then he looked up to heaven and groaned,
and said to him,
"*Ephphatha!*"— that is, "Be opened!" —
And immediately the man's ears were opened,
his speech impediment was removed,
and he spoke plainly.
He ordered them not to tell anyone.
But the more he ordered them not to,
the more they proclaimed it.
They were exceedingly astonished and they said,
"He has done all things well.
He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Words from our Holy Father

Jesus' life, especially during the three years of his public ministry, was a continual encounter with people. Among them, the sick had a special place. How many pages of the Gospel tell of these encounters! The paralytic, the blind man, the leper, the possessed man, the epileptic, and the countless people suffering from illnesses of every kind.... Jesus made himself close to each of them, and cured them with his presence and his healing power. Therefore, among the works of mercy, we cannot fail to visit and assist those who are sick.

-Pope Francis, General Audience, 11/9/16

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Ready the Way

"Ready the way of the Lord, Ready the way of the Lord."
 A voice cries out in the wilderness:
 "Ready the way of the Lord."
 Let every valley be filled, Let every valley be filled.
 Let every mountain be humbled,
 Let every valley be filled.

**Here is your God, coming with your vindication.
 Look and behold the saving power of God.**

Those who are blind will then see,
 Those who are deaf will then hear.
 Those who are lame will then leap for joy,
 Those who are mute will then sing.

Text and Music by Bob Hurd Published by OCP

Psalm 146

*Praise the Lord, my soul! Praise the Lord, my soul!
 Alleluia! Praise the Lord, my soul!*

Open My Eyes

Open my eyes Lord, help me to see your face
 Open my eyes Lord, help me to see

Open my ears Lord, help me to hear your voice
 Open my ears Lord, help me to hear

Open my heart Lord, help me to love like you
 Open my heart Lord, help me to love

I live within you, deep in your heart, O Love
 I live within you, rest now in me

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“Ground Rules” for Small Group Faith Sharing

- Maintain confidentiality – “Whatever happens in small group stays in small group.”
- Judgment-free zone – You don’t have to agree with every one, but you have to have respect for everyone.
- No “shut downs” or “put downs” – See Christ in one another, BE Christ to one another.
- Don’t be a “discussion hog” – Be sure that everyone that wants to gets a chance to share.
- Leave room for the Spirit – Silence is OK! Not everyone has to share.
- Practice active listening – Avoid interrupting, fidgeting, criticizing, lecturing, or thinking of what you’re going to say while another person is speaking.
- Questions are a guide - You do not have to answer all of them or go in order.
- Be open – God is doing amazing things!

Petitions

Our response: “Lord, come and save us.”

Closing Prayer

God of power and compassion, in Christ you reveal your will to heal and to save. Open our ears to your redeeming word and move our hearts by the strength of your love, so that our every word and work may proclaim as Messiah Jesus the Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.



Questions for Reflection

1. What word or phrase resonated to you in the Gospel?
2. Consider the man who was deaf and dumb in the Gospel. When, in your life, have you been “spiritually deaf” to the Word of God? Have you ever been “spiritually dumb”, where you found it difficult to proclaim the Gospel? What “cured” you?
3. In what ways can we be “deaf” to the love of God?
4. In the First Reading, Isaiah writes about the hope of deliverance from exile. From what suffering do you need to be liberated? Does this message of hope speak to you?
5. Consider the Second Reading. Have you ever shown partiality to someone because of wealth or prestige, or perhaps how he or she was dressed? Have you ever judged someone because of these things? Does this passage feel like a challenge or an affirmation?
6. In both the First and Second Readings we see the disabled and the poor being shown preferential treatment. How does this compare to our current world? Who, in our society, would be lifted up if we followed the standards in these readings?
7. Who are among the most difficult to welcome into your life? Who are those among us that are most forgotten or ignored, or even flat-out rejected? Who is missing from our Eucharistic table on Sundays? How can we create a place of welcome to them within our community?
8. What words or images do the First and Second Readings and the Psalm have in common? What is the message for you?
9. Read Pope Francis’ words on the reverse of this page. What does he say about encounter? What can we learn about encounter from Jesus in the Gospel? How does this inform how we are to interact with those on the margins?