

September 05, 2021
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 35:4-7a
Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10
Js 2:1-5
Mk 7:31-37

WE ARE DEAF AND MUTE TOO!

An old man is talking to the family doctor and says: **"Doctor, I think my wife is going deaf."** The doctor answers, **"Well, here's something you can try on her to test her hearing. Stand some distance away from her without facing her and ask her a question. If she doesn't answer, move a little closer and ask again. Keep repeating this until she answers. Then you'll be able to tell just how hard of hearing she really is."**

The man goes home and tries it out. He walks in the door and asks, **"Honey, what's for dinner?"** He doesn't hear an answer, so he moves closer to her. **"Honey, what's for dinner?"** Still, he gets no answer. He repeats this several times, until he's standing just one foot away from her. Finally, she answers, **"For the eleventh time, I said we're having meat loaf!"**

Kidding aside, **how is our hearing nowadays? Is it deteriorating/fading? Can we still listen to the Word of God clearly? Is our attentive listening to his Words reflected/projected on our daily actions?**

In the gospel story today the Lord Jesus healed a deaf man who had a speech impediment. He did the healing privately. The gospel says, **"He took him off by himself away from the crowd."** **Why?** The Lord Jesus did it to protect the deaf man from embarrassment with noisy onlookers. Aside from protecting the deaf man from embarrassment, the Lord Jesus knew clearly that his mission is not to create a show/spectacle but rather to liberate/free people from their infirmities in a quiet but powerful way.

The healing the Lord Jesus did, showed the beauty and goodness of God's transforming love. He demonstrated once again that his objective/goal is to bring compassion and mercy to the needy. His purpose is to effect wholeness/healing to the infirmed. In healing the deaf man, the Lord Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy who said: **"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."**

Before I continue, let me share with you another story. There was a quadriplegic man, who gave a retreat talk from his wheelchair. After giving the story of his life, he said, **"Everyone has a disability. Mine is just visible."** What the quadriplegic man said was true. We all have disabilities – some are visible; others are not.

Yes, you heard it right! We all have disabilities. The deaf man in the gospel story proclaimed to us is symbolic of our own disabilities. We may have a perfect hearing and yet not hear the Word of God. We may have an impeccable speech and yet unable to profess the faith and act on it especially in public.

I remember attending a function and one of the speakers, a Catholic, went to the podium to deliver his 'Thank You' message. I listened carefully to the speech. The list of the people he thanked was long. I was sad when he finished his speech. **Why?** I was sad because in that long list of names he mentioned he did not even thank God for the opportunity to accomplish the work given him. Truly, he was mute in thanking God in public.

Are we not deaf and mute too at times?

- We heard the call to 'serve and not to be served' and yet we remain passive about it...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to forgive and yet we choose to keep the grudge...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to share our talents for the sake of the faith community and yet we opt not to get involved...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to reach out to the poor and yet we choose to make excuses not to...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to teach the faith to our kids and yet we decide it's not in our priority list...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to proclaim the Good News to others and yet we want others to do it for us...that's deafness!
- We heard the call to protect life from conception to natural death and yet we elect not to speak on their behalf...that's muteness!
- We heard the call to stand firm for Christ Jesus and yet we choose to keep quiet given the opportunity...that's muteness!
- We see injustice and racial discrimination and yet we opt for silence...that's muteness!

The gospel proclaimed to us is, indeed, relevant for it reminds us of our own 'spiritual' deafness and muteness in relation to God and the mission entrusted to us. Hence, in this Mass, let us approach the Lord Jesus with humility and ask him to heal us from our own 'spiritual disabilities' so that we can listen clearly to his call and give witness to it in public.

God bless us all!