

Sermon for Sunday, Week 23 of Ordinary Time, Year B

2021

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

First. Jesus shows compassion.

Not only the things that our Lord Jesus said, but also the things that He did, teach us about God and His love for us.

Our Gospel reading today gives us a good example of this.

Jesus heals a man who can neither hear nor speak properly.
He heals him.

And He does so in a beautiful way: He places His fingers into his ears, and touches his tongue. He *touches* him.

That tells us something about the Lord's compassion and love.

This man couldn't hear, and because of that the sense of touch was especially important to him.
So Jesus uses that to impress His presence, His compassion, His love, on this man's heart.

See how lovingly He comes to meet us where we are?

Second. The symbolic meaning of Jesus' actions.

And He says, "Ephphatha": that is, "Be opened".

With this "gentle word" (St. Ephrem) He cures his deafness and gives him the power of speech.

This is symbolic of what He does also for us in spirit.

And that's why in the liturgy of Baptism, there's a direct reference to this Gospel episode.

The priest or deacon touches the ears and the mouth of the one's been baptised, and says, "The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May He soon touch your ears to receive His word, and your mouth to proclaim His faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father".

So the healing of the person in the Gospel, apart from being historically completely true, is also a symbol of how the new life we receive in Baptism makes us able to 'hear (or receive) God's word' and 'proclaim His faith'.

God gives us His Spirit, and He helps us to believe and to put God's message into practice.

Third. The Holy Spirit makes us truly free.

That's what "proclaim His faith" means.

It means Speak about God not only with words, but also with actions.

If we sin – and especially if we get used to sin – we turn in on ourselves and become like a plant whose growth is stunted.

But when the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts – the Church tells us – He "gives us a heart that is filled with love for God and mankind" (cf. YouCat 290). He becomes for us "the power that leads us to inner freedom"; He "opens our hearts for love" and makes us more able to do what is good and loving.

In other words, **He sets us free for love!**

This is a beautiful gift.

It enables us to become all that God meant us to be; to attain our full potential.

It's a wonderful experience because, as Eric Clapton once sang, "love is lovely".
And that's especially true of infinite, pure and holy Love – which is what God is.

So let us give God thanks, and joyfully sing His praise as we go about our daily lives imitating our
Lord and His virtues.

Praised be Jesus and Mary!