

XII TRINITY 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ST. MARK 7. 31

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The five senses...we take them for granted...we see...we hear...we smell...we taste...we touch...what if we were to lose one or more of our five senses?

Sometimes one of our five senses will kick into high gear to take up the slack from the loss of another...hearing gets sharper for those who have eye problems. Also today's medical miracles...hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear better...eyeglasses and contact lenses and specialized surgery to see better...devices to speak better...prosthetics to stay mobile...are God's healing gifts to us through Science...helping people live fuller and richer lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus is heading south from Tyre and Sidon (in Modern Lebanon) through Decapolis...the area of the Ten Towns...on his way to Lake Galilee and eventually Jerusalem. The Ten Towns were centers of Greek and Roman culture and include the modern-day cities of Amman, Jordan and Damascus, Syria. This was Gentile territory.

Saint John records the first miracle of Jesus took place in Cana of Galilee...in non-Jewish territory...when he turned water into wine after the host of a wedding banquet discovered he had no more wine to serve. We talk about this miracle at the beginning of the Nuptial Mass.

Jesus performed a lot of healing miracles...sometimes by physically touching someone like the man in today's Gospel...sometimes by just speaking words assuring them healing has already taken place like the Syrian woman with a sick daughter. Jesus didn't limit his actions to preaching and teaching or to one group of people.

The Gospel tells us that as Jesus was traveling along "some people" brought him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak. He was a Gentile. They begged Jesus to heal him. He probably was not born deaf...because he could still speak...although not clearly. We are not told the circumstances that caused him to lose his hearing or ability to speak clearly.

Saint Mark tells us Jesus took the man aside away from the crowd to heal him...he wasn't interested in putting on a show or call attention to himself. Jesus' healing miracles were never about him...they were about restoring people's souls and bodies.

Jesus let out a deep groan...a sign of his intense emotion and compassion for the man. Jesus spoke to the man in Aramaic...the common language...*Ephphatha...Open up!* Not only could the man HEAR, he could SPEAK without any trouble. Jesus told the people to keep quiet...but they didn't...they were amazed at what they saw.

Jesus made the prophecies from Isaiah...*blind people will see again and deaf people will hear again...*and from Ezekiel...*people will get back the power of speech and be able to talk clearly again...*come true. Amazing too is the gift of God's Spirit...opening our eyes, ears and mouths...see, hear and proclaim his love.

During the Intercessions at every Mass we pray for healing for ourselves or for others. Like the man in the Gospel, we don't need to know their names or specifics. Some people ask the priest to lay his hand on their head and pray for healing...we are doing what Saint James instructs us to do. And miraculous healings do happen!

When it comes to prayer and healing we must never allow ourselves to think the longer we keep someone's name on the Intercessions List or the more of us that pray for him or for some other cause, the more likely God is to pay attention and take action. That way of thinking is flawed...it turns God into a magician and healing into a magic act. God heals because he is about life...he will do his miracles when and how he chooses...and he knows what's best for us.

Jesus told the people not to broadcast the miracle they had just seen...but they couldn't help themselves...they did anyway. Jesus was not ready to call attention to himself because he had a lot more work to accomplish. We are not under the same constraints.

Let's ask ourselves how we will use our five senses to broadcast the message...LOOK HOW WELL GOD DOES EVERYTHING!

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