

XII TRINITY 2018
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
ST. MARK 7. 31-37



There is no doubt about it...we live in an age of technological wonders...let's call them miracles through God's gift of science!

A recent CBS News report profiled a one-time high school surf champion and snowboarder who fell off a roof a decade ago. The fall broke the young man's back and left him paralyzed from the chest down.

Relegated to life in a wheel chair and the potential health problems that can develop from sitting all day...the young man questioned why he should even bother to stay alive. Enter a 21st Century miracle...the robotic exoskeleton.

The device uses sensors to help the young man do what he and his family and friends and even his doctors never thought he would be able to do...walk again. Still in the experimental stage...the device offers hope for mobility-challenged people.

Most of us take our five senses for granted. When one or more of our senses fail us...some of our other senses can help compensate for the loss. Hearing aids and cochlear implants can help people hear better...devices help people with speech impediments speak better...artificial limbs can help people stay active.

The man in today's Gospel couldn't hear and couldn't speak clearly. He had none of the technological miracles we have today to help him. To make matters worse...most people believed his condition was God's punishment for some sin he or one of his ancestors had committed. That made him an outcast with few friends...someone to be avoided.

Let's dispense with the idea God punishes us with a specific illness for a specific sin we, or one of our ancestors, might have committed...God doesn't operate that way. Sickness...including the loss of one of our five senses...is a symptom of the condition we call sin. There are consequences for sinful behavior...but God is interested in helping us get whole again...he is in the business of making our lives better...not worse. Jesus is the great healer...not the great punisher.

Jesus healed the man in the Gospel and he did so by taking him away from the crowd...he did not want this to be a circus act...it was an encounter between God and man. The man was able to HEAR and speak CLEARLY. Jesus made the man's life better than before.

In restoring the man's hearing and speech...Jesus fulfilled prophecies from Isaiah and Ezekiel...blind people will see again, deaf people will hear again, people who can't walk will jump in the air and dance, and people who can't speak will shout for joy.

Technology is a gift from God and it can help people live fuller and richer lives...like those with hearing and speech problems...like the young man who fell from a roof and now looks forward to walking again.

All of us have at some point in our lives faced physical challenges that have weighed both our bodies and souls down. Jesus wants to help us sort things out. He wants to help us cope with those physical burdens and not become discouraged...life IS worth living. And he wants to help us clear away those things that make us spiritually blind and deaf and unable to speak.

Saint Mark tells us Jesus did a curious thing after he healed the man of his hearing and speech impediments...he told the people not to say nothing about what they had just seen...of course they did anyway.

We are under no restrictions to keep quiet. We must tell others what we know to be true...Jesus is the one we can go to when we are tired from carrying life's heavy loads and he will give us rest! He will give us comfort and strength. He will help us sort things out.

We have five senses...they are all involved in one way or another in what we do here today. And if one of our senses isn't working the way we would like it to...we still have the others...and we can use them to tell the world about Jesus...and they too will be amazed...

..."Look...how well he does everything!"

