

XII TRINITY 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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ST. MARK 7. 31-37

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We live in an age of technological miracles the man in today's Gospel who couldn't hear or speak clearly couldn't have imagined.

Through God's gifts of Science and Medicine...people today who are sensory or physically challenged...have special devices that help them see, hear and talk better...and help them stay mobile. All of these gifts help them live life to the fullest...the disabled become enabled.

People like the man in today's Gospel who couldn't hear or speak clearly were at a disadvantage. They were often cut off from family and friends...and outcasts from society. There was no sign language, hearing devices or speech therapists to help the man. The medical community offered no hope.

The action in the Gospel takes place just after Jesus healed a woman's daughter who had an evil spirit. He is heading south from Tyre and Sidon (in Modern Lebanon) through an area called the Ten Towns. 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.

The Gospel tells us that as Jesus was traveling along "some people" brought the man who was deaf and could hardly speak and begged Jesus to heal him. The man was probably a Gentile. We get a clue the man wasn't born hearing-challenged. The Gospel tells us he couldn't speak clearly. We learn to speak because we hear words and phrases. If the man had been born deaf, he probably wouldn't have been able to speak at all.

Saint Mark tells us Jesus took the man aside and away from the crowd to heal him...he wasn't interested in putting on a circus act or in calling attention to himself. Jesus' healing miracles were never about him...they were always about restoring people's souls and bodies...they were about making people physically and spiritually whole again.

Jesus feels deep emotion and compassion for the man and lets out a sigh as he heals him. He speaks to the man in Aramaic...the

common language...*Ephphatha...Open up!* Not only could the man HEAR again, he could SPEAK without any trouble. Jesus told the people around him not to speak about what they saw...of course they didn't listen to him. The man's healing was front-page news in the Galilee Gazette.

In healing the man Jesus shows he has power over illness. Although only Saint Mark records this particular healing, Jesus healed many people, sometimes by touching them, sometimes at a distance. 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.* And Jesus never asked about a person's parentage...he just healed them!

During the Intercessions at every Sunday Mass we pray for healing for ourselves and for others. Like the man in the Gospel, we don't need to know their names or specific details about their illnesses. Some people ask the priest to lay his hand on them and pray for healing...we are doing what Saint James instructs us to do...it is available to anyone at any time.

When it comes to prayer and healing we must never think the longer we keep someone's name on the Intercessions List or the more of us that pray for him, the more likely God will pay attention and take action. That way of thinking is flawed...it turns God into a magician and healing into a magic act. God hears our prayers for healing all the time. He answers our prayers...yes, no, or wait a while.

Jesus told the people who witnessed the healing in today's Gospel not to broadcast the event. It's not surprising they ignored Jesus' instructions. We are under no such constraints. We have license to broadcast God's love for us and talk about Jesus' power to heal mind, body and soul to all who will listen.

Whether we have our five senses or have some physical or other challenges we shouldn't let anything stop us from proclaiming the message...LOOK HOW WELL GOD DOES EVERYTHING!

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