

Commentary on the Gospel: Jesus' Look of Mercy

Gospel for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 7:31-37*)

Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hand upon him. And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and

touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

And he charged them to tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.”

Commentary

In today's Gospel, we meditate on Jesus' look of mercy and his influence on our own lives.

The first reading this Sunday is from the book of Isaiah: “Behold, your God ... He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy” (*Is 35:4-6*).

These words of Scripture are fulfilled with Jesus. He is the one who fulfills what was announced by the prophets; it is He who makes the deaf hear and the blind see.

Jesus also works miracles in our own life. Often these will be interior rather than exterior miracles. He continues acting in the heart of each person. For example, He makes us aware of our life as a gift from God. He helps us realize how marvelous it is that God has forgiven our sins. He gives us the grace to recognize Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist. God is always acting in people.

Let us meditate for a moment on how Jesus comes to the aid of those in need. The people around him exclaim in amazement: “he has done

all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.”

Jesus always looks with mercy on a person in need. Jesus looks with love at every person who is suffering: those who don't understand something that has happened in their life; those suffering an injustice; those who are discouraged by how their life has turned out... With those who are suffering, God's response is always a look of mercy. He tells us “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” Open yourself to God's love, open yourself to his forgiveness, open yourself to his loving action.

Saint Josemaría liked to consider how all the wonders of the world are nothing compared with God's love: “Isn't our heart moved by the immensity of God's love?”

Let us strive to imitate this merciful attitude of Jesus, his concern for all those in need. Pope Francis urges us

to foster a “culture of encounter” -- to go out to encounter the needs of others, to listen to those who are discouraged, to accompany those who are alone.

The main obstacle is our own selfishness, when we focus on ourselves and fail to perceive the needs of others. We shouldn't exclude anyone; we shouldn't judge anyone. We shouldn't hold prejudices about anyone, because we would be closing our heart to our neighbor.

Let us ask our Lord to help us share in his look of mercy on those in need, and to do what we can to help them.