

Sept. 5, 2021

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 35:4-7a

Jas 2:1-5

Mk 7:31-37

GROW: Our oldest son is deaf. I vividly remember watching him notice sounds for the first time in the days after his cochlear implant was activated: the “caw” of a crow, a doorbell, the low rumble of the furnace kicking in. Our job as parents was to provide a running commentary to help him understand the meaning of each sound that so many of us take for granted: “See the birds? That is a crow!” “Your dad is home.” “The heat is coming on.” I’m reminded of those early days when I read Mark’s account of Jesus restoring hearing to the deaf man. While most of us can hear, so often we take the sounds all around us for granted or relegate them to background noise – including the Scripture we hear at Mass each week. As Bishop Robert Barron writes, “This deaf man stands for all of us who do not hear the word of God, who have grown oblivious to it.” As we listen to today’s readings, we can ask Jesus to open our ears and our hearts to the word of God.

GO: Mark spares no detail in describing Jesus’ encounter with the deaf man who had a speech impediment. Jesus places a finger in his ear and spits, touching his tongue, then utters the word “*Ephphatha!* (“Be opened”) Immediately, the man can hear and speak clearly. When listening to this reading, I often focus on the man’s hearing. But Jesus also cured the man’s speech impediment, which I think indicates we’re not supposed to just hear God’s word, we are to speak to it, and speak of it. Once we allow Jesus to open our ears and hearts to the Good News, sharing it will begin to come naturally. There may still be times when our Catholic tongues feel tied, but “Be strong, fear not!” Jesus will give us the words.

ACTIONS: Next time you take a drive, listen to the day’s Scripture readings. Ask Jesus to open your ears and hearts to his words and show you how best to share them with others.

And most teachers would agree: The more senses we engage, the more we take in. If you have trouble following the readings at Mass, open your missalette and read along silently.