

**23<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Sept 8<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**Isaiah 35: 4-7; James 2: 1-5; Mark 7: 31-37**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The Messianic prophecies of Isaiah are well known and 700 years later most of those were fulfilled in the person and ministry of Jesus. In today's first reading Isaiah prophesies, **“Here is your God, he comes with vindication; then the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing.”** The physical healing of the deaf and mute person described in today's gospel is the clear indication that the Messianic age prophesied by Isaiah is finally dawned. Among the miracles of Jesus we also find the healing of the blind and the paralyzed.

Usually Jesus used his Word of Command to heal the sick. But deviating from that method, here we find him using a series of rituals to heal the deaf person. First of all, he takes the man outside of the crowd then he puts his finger in the deaf man's ears and spitting, touches his tongue and commands, *‘Ephphatha’-be opened*. We have couple similar miracles in the gospels. In case of the blind man in Bethsaida, Jesus uses the spittle and touches the blind man's eyes. In another incident in John chapter 9, Jesus smears the mud on the blind man's eyes mixed with spittle and asks him, “Go wash in the pool of Siloam.” He too was healed.

In the ancient world spittle was supposed to have curative property in it. We may wonder why Jesus needs any curative property at all. In the deaf and mute man's case the request of healing came from the deaf man's friends; because he could not speak to Jesus. Jesus moves with pity seeing the faith of that man's friends who spoke for their voiceless friend. **In every miracle what we find is not a mere physical healing; rather we witness the transforming power of God's love working in the person affected.** In the case of the deaf and mute man, not only he has been healed of his physical ailment but also given the opportunity to listen to the Word of God from Jesus and he bears witness to the love of Jesus later.

*The deaf man in today's gospel also symbolizes our communication problem with God.* In the modern age many people are spiritually deaf and mute and find it hard to hear the voice of God and act accordingly. **Sometimes, people who are lacking faith or overwhelmed by sorrow, frustration and terminal illness, find it hard to communicate with God and hear His voice or word.**

And also these days many people hate to hear the voice of God. For it demands change and sacrifice from them. So they try to silence God or ignore Him intentionally in every area of life. Unfortunately, the bad media tries to remove God from individuals' life and from all public places. God's Commandments have nothing to do with our modern justice system and life style. ***In the modern age, people conveniently ignore the presence of God and the voice of God coming through the poor, the oppressed and the unborn.*** In our country the law and order system is pretty good and no one is totally neglected or justice being denied. Unfortunately, the most helpless ones, the unborn children, who have no voice and who remain totally helpless are not even considered to be a human being and their cry for help is not heard. Remember, **their voiceless cry is the voice of Jesus. It is a grave sin, if we shut our ears to that.**

In the present age children do not have good opportunity to hear the voice of Jesus and learn about God at all. The children who have received the First Communion are very often not sent back to CCD classes for the continuation of the faith formation. The utter negligence of the parents denies these children their right to learn more about God and their faith. The same parents try to give all skills to the children and the children are over pressured to acquire all sorts of skills. Many don't have the experience of prayer at home other than the grace they may say before a meal. When the children grow up in this situation, they never recognize the voice of God coming to them at all. And in their critical situation they don't know how to turn to God for help either. If our children are deaf towards the Word of God and blind towards the moral values, it is not they who are to be blamed; rather their parents are responsible for that. The other day in Georgia a 14 year old student shot and killed two fellow students and two teachers and injured 9. We ask, what happens to our children. But, instead, we should ask what happens to our culture? The Word of God is vanishing from among us. In **Amos 8:11-12** God warns His people, ***“Yes, days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send famine upon the land: Not a famine of bread, or thirst for water, but for hearing the Word of the Lord.”***