

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY - B

The miracle that Jesus works in healing the deaf man made a big impact on the early Church.

How could it not since - as we heard in the first reading - this kind of cure was one of the signs of the coming of the long-awaited Messiah.

Besides the wonder of the actual physical healing, this miracle was understood to symbolize Jesus opening the ears of faith of those who would believe in him.

And those who had their ears opened to his word of truth also had their tongues loosened to proclaim this faith to others and to give glory and praise to God.

"Ephphatha!" "Be opened!"

That could sum up the heart of Jesus' mission: To open people's hearts to the fullness of God's plan of salvation.

This was the message Jesus proclaimed to the scribes and the Pharisees, as we heard last week:

"Do not hide behind the mask of feigned holiness or get stuck in the details of merely human interpretations of the Law."

"Be open to the new thing God is revealing through his Son Jesus."

"Be open to the healing he brings."

By God's grace we have all had our ears opened and our tongues loosed by the Holy Spirit working through the sacraments.

However, during the course of life's journey our spiritual hearing can become impaired.

In today's second reading St. James talks about one such "impairment:" showing partiality for the rich and disdain for the poor.

How do we treat those who are poor or simply poorly dressed?

What judgements do we make about those who are in some way different from us?

Do we graciously welcome the stranger we encounter in our Eucharistic assembly?

Or consider another central teaching of Jesus: Are we willing to forgive those who have done wrong to us?

At times, we can have "selective hearing," paying attention to only those parts of the Gospel that are comforting to us.

We need Jesus to once again come to us with his healing power: "Ephphatha! Be opened!"

May the ear of our heart be attuned to the sometimes unsettling - but always saving - word he speaks to us each day.