

*“And immediately the man’s ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly”.*

What a vivid, powerful healing scene proclaimed today. In His Divine Providence and Wisdom God reminds us of the healing power of Jesus Christ while in need of healing the terrible wounds that have inflicted His Church.

What does it mean to be deaf? The dictionary reads “lacking the power of hearing or having impaired hearing; unwilling, or unable to hear or to pay attention to something”. What is an impediment? It is “a hindrance or obstruction in doing something; a defect in a person’s speech, such as a lisp or stammer”. The man who is brought to Jesus—a corporal work of mercy in itself, for healing isn’t someone who cannot hear nor speak, but impaired. Actually, he can be us.

The power and beauty of the Incarnation is on full display here. In a vivid portrayal Our Blessed Lord puts his fingers in ears, lays on his hands and spits on a tongue while groaning up to heaven. How beautiful that his humanity is the instrument in which he gives divine life!

Why did he perform such miracles? Pope St. Leo the Great said that “he healed bodies to cure souls; he transformed outward healings into inward remedies”. Christ opens the ears of the deaf man so he can have knowledge of the words of God and loosens his tongue so he can proclaim them. Why heal the tongue and not his lips?

St. James, in the third chapter of his Letter explains the tongue is a weapon, and a potentially dangerous one! He writes that *the tongue is a small fire that can set a huge forest ablaze...a restless evil, full of deadly poison; with it we bless the Lord and Father and curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God.* Oh so true!

We have all been wounded by poisonous words and it hurts, doesn’t it? And we have all sinfully employed our tongues to wound too: at times perhaps without even being aware of it. And we also witness it happening to others, in our homes, workplaces, and social settings. Do we examine ourselves in how we speak to one another, and about one another?

Because we live in a culture that seemingly feeds on and fuels the deadly poison of the tongue! Newspapers, television, radio, websites, blogs can be cauldrons that brew deadly speech-deadly to the soul-ours and others. He is a liberal, she is gay, he hates the poor, she is an idiot, he is a liar and cheater, they are racists, he is a Russian agent

and on and on! And some of our Church leaders are not helping either as they engage in the same behavior with one another!

When is it going to stop? It stops when each of us decides it stops! All this noise and junk deafens our ears to the Gospel message and distracts us from our true call to discipleship, which is to proclaim the Gospel in word, deed and truth. Otherwise we are the ones with a speech impediment in need of healing! Now, more than ever we need to be proclaiming Jesus Christ in the way we live our lives, starting by setting ourselves apart in the nature of our speech: what we say, how we say it, what we refrain from saying and how we refrain from it. The world is in desperate need of the healing power of Jesus Christ-not more banter. More virtue, not less!

How are we deaf to the Word of God? What is impeding our hearing? Is it what we are watching on TV or listening to on the radio? Does the iPhone never leave our hands to keep up with so many newsfeeds and blogs that have nothing to do with the Gospel? If so, and I assure you I am preaching to myself, put down the iPhone or the newspaper, turn off the TV and radio and pick up your Rosary or a Holy Bible or spend time in prayerful silence instead. We speak so much more eloquently and lovingly when our souls are fed with the goodness of God; not when our ears are impaired by the noise of the world.

Who have we wounded with our poisonous tongue? Find them and with true contrition ask for their forgiveness. How are we speaking to one another, and about one another, at home, in the workplace, on the telephone, in emails and texts? Does it reflect our Christian beliefs? If not, start to change. This requires a holy desire, so pray for Our Blessed Lord's assistance. Consider making a good Confession to receive the healing of Jesus Christ. Make a good act of Contrition before approaching the altar. As unworthy as we all are, it is he who takes away the sins of the world, and through the Holy Mass, he sanctifies it.

Again, this is the beautiful gift of the Incarnation: Christ continues to use his humanity through the ministry of His Sacred Priesthood to give us a share in his divinity. He desires to make us pure and holy. By his wounds we are healed.

"He who obtains healing" wrote St. Jerome, "is always drawn aside from turbulent thoughts, disorderly actions and incoherent speeches. The ears then, are opened to hymns, songs and psalms. And the tongue is loosened that it may pour forth the good word".

Mary, model of purity, pray for us.