

Be Opened

Is. 35: 4-7; Ps. 146; Ja. 2: 1-5, 27; Mk. 7: 31-37

'Ephphatha' (Be opened). Jesus uttered this word and healed the deaf-mute by touching his ears and tongue. This was one of many miraculous healings that Jesus performed that was recorded in the Gospels.

We read about the faith of the man's friends in bringing him to Jesus and begging Jesus to heal him. And we can imagine how Jesus totally changed the man's life. The deaf-mute was previously relegated to one of the lowest strata of society, unable to communicate and to participate in a meaningful way in Jewish life. Jesus had compassion on this man. As we read in the Second Reading,: 'Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love Him?

Not only did Jesus cure the man but He also elevated him. After Jesus performed the miracle, the man could hear and speak. But more importantly, by 'opening' the deaf-mute, Jesus made it possible for him to hear the Word of God and to proclaim it to the world.

This event in the life of Jesus is recalled in the Liturgy of Baptism. In the part of the Liturgy called Ephphatha, the priest touches the ears and the lips of the baptized person and intones this prayer:

The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the mute speak.
May He soon touch your ears to receive His Word,
and your mouth to proclaim His faith,
To the praise and glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every baptized person is called to receive the Word of the Lord and to proclaim it. We all have this vocation. But more than simply receiving the Word, we are to listen and to meditate on it so that we may discern its meaning for our lives and for the lives of others. And then we are to go out and take the Word to those that we meet.

Although most of us have no recollection of our baptisms, we know that we have a baptismal calling to receive the Word of the Lord and then to proclaim it, all for the glory of God. Let us resolve to read Sacred Scripture daily; at least a chapter of the Gospels, to receive God's Word. Let us reflect deeply on what we read and not only apply it to our own lives but also to proclaim it boldly to the world. Let us be prepared to defend our faith strongly when called upon and to bring the Word of God to those in need choosing Spirit-filled words to provide comfort and strength to the suffering.

Let us prepare the way for the Lord to come to those in need through our proclamation of the Word and so help to bring the prophetic words of Isaiah to life for those in need of God's healing:

Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.