23 Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle C

September 8/9, 2012

Isaiah 35: 4-7a; James 2: 1-5; Mark 7: 31-37

We heard this morning from the prophet Isaiah: “Be strong! Fear not! Here is your God! The eyes of the blind will see; the ears of the deaf will see; and the tongue of the mute will sing!”

Have you ever noticed that to develop the ability to speak clearly, human beings need to first be able to hear well? Someone who is deaf or very hard of hearing almost always has difficulty articulating words, especially if their hearing impediment is from birth.

In a court of law, in order to give valid testimony, you must have been able to see or clearly hear something, otherwise your testimony is deemed unreliable and inadmissible.

Over and over again in the Gospels, Jesus demonstrates that the blind must see, the deaf must hear, and the mute must speak.

Jesus spends an awful lot of time in the Gospels clearing people’s ears and loosening their tongues and taking cataracts off their eyes. In a physical sense, God wants us to hear and see and speak; that is how he made us, to be healthy and whole. That is why even today he miraculously heal people at times. God also wants us to see and hear and speak in a spiritual sense; that is why he calls us all to conversion of heart and mind and body.

So if God wills it, if he wants it, why don’t we hear, see and speak clearly about matters of our faith? Why don’t we get out there and evangelize the world? Evangelization is a scary word, right? Don’t be too afraid. This new evangelization is our mutual responsibility, yours and mine, the laity and the clergy, as the Second Vatican Council so clearly taught.

Pope John Paul I called for this evangelization on the day of his death in 1978. Pope John Paul II took up that call and carried it forward, and so has Pope Benedict XVI. We deacons and Bishops and priests are always being challenged to go out and share the Gospel with the world, *but we* *cannot accomplish the task alone*. All of us, you the laity and we the clergy must put ourselves into this task.

So where can you start? Today’s Gospel suggests starting with your ears. We have to hear better than we do. Hearing will lead to obedience and service. Get spiritual hearing aids if you have to do so. Amplify God’s voice in your life! You got to hear before you can speak intelligently. What are those “spiritual hearing aids?” Here is one (HOLD UP THE BIBLE) We got to study God’s Word. Here is another (HOLD UP THE CATECHISM) We got to read the Catechism. I know, “Catechism,” a scary word. Here is another (OPEN ARMS TO ALTAR AND CONGREGATION) Go to Mass every Sunday or Saturday evening and listen to the homily and the Scriptures. You got to know the faith, faith which is a gift that comes from hearing God’s Word of Truth.

In the Gospel, Jesus first opened the man’s ears, and then he loosed his tongue. Jesus will do the same for you if you let Him touch you. So Read, Reflect, Listen and Pray!

After your ears have been cleared, then work on your eyes. Remove the cataracts from your eyes by looking squarely at God. Here are two simple ways to do this: First, for every hour you spend in front of your computer or TV screen, spend five minutes looking up into the sky and the hills and the river and take in creation. Creation isn’t God, but it does reflect his grandeur. Second, spend one hour a month in front of the Eucharist at the holy hour we have here the first Thursday of each month. If you can’t make it then, come to the church. It is unlocked and spend an hour a month before the tabernacle, looking at God.I guarantee you your life will change if you do this.

Finally, loosen your tongue after your ears and eyes have been healed. Speak to others about what you heard and what you saw. Witness to others, and when you do, speak boldly, speak with confidence, and as the Gospel today indicates, speak with ***joy***. How can you do this in a simple way? Pray out loud before every meal, both at home and in restaurants. Refuse to say the words, “God” and “Jesus” unless you are praying or blessing something. Wear a symbol of your Catholic faith such as a cross. Cast your vote after you have been informed by the teachings of the Church, especially in regards to abortion, marriage, and war.

My friends, it is up to us now to speak the words that Jesus spoke. It is now up to us to give witness, to testify before the world to the Truth of God’s love and justice. We are the ears and eyes of Jesus today. We are his voice and we must speak with confidence and with joy. Do not be afraid to welcome Christ. Do not be afraid to accept his power! Do not be afraid! “Be strong! fear not!” as the prophet Isaiah said. And, as Blessed Pope John Paul II said early in his papacy, ***“Open, open wide the*** ***doors of your life to Christ!”***