

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

September 9, 2012 7:30am and 12noon

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Heidi's Parents

Three months ago, at the beginning of June, I flew to Denver to officiate at my nephew David's wedding.

David married a young woman named Heidi. I had met Heidi for the first time on a visit to Denver last October.

Heidi's mother and father are both deaf. And their serious hearing impairment also makes it impossible for them to speak clearly.

As I understand it, the speech impairment follows the hearing impairment. With all of that, Heidi's parents are friendly, jovial, and a pleasure to be with.

The Deaf and Mute Man

I thought of Heidi's parents when I read today's gospel.

There is this man who is both deaf and mute. And notice: Jesus first enables the man to hear and then, after that, to speak.

If he can hear, then his speaking will follow. And notice also: Jesus heals the man by using, in the English translation, just two words: "*Be opened!*"

"Be opened!" In opening the man's ears and mouth, Jesus heals the man physically.

But, as wonderful as this is, the healing is even more than the physical. In those days, unlike Heidi's parents today, those who were deaf and mute were very isolated from society.

They were treated as incapable of holding a job or of being with others in any way at all. They were socially isolated and, on top of that, they were also perceived as alienated from God.

Why? Because their disability was seen as a punishment for sin. So Jesus' healing of this man is physical, and it is also social and spiritual – that's how great it is!

"Be Opened!"

Now we must take this one step farther.

Jesus' words – "*Be opened!*" – are also intended for the disciples and for us. Jesus calls us to "*Be opened!*"

Recently, I came across a very simple morning prayer. It is easy to remember.

“Lord, open me: inward to you, outward to others.” “Lord, open me: inward to you, outward to others.”

Jesus wants us to *“Be opened!”* And for that to happen, we need to want it and ask him to open us.

“Open Us: Inward”

So first, we pray: *“Lord, open us: inward to you.”*

Open us to your presence within us. You are here, within us, removing our isolation and being our constant companion in the journey of life.

Open us to your strength within us. You are our empowerment to deal with the everyday stuff of life and our refuge when times are tough.

Open us to your love within us. You are the outreaching, unconditional love of God and the grounding of our self-worth and self-esteem.

And open us to your healing within us. You, little by little, put together our loose ends, remove our alienation from God and make us whole and holy persons.

“Open Us: Outward”

And then, we pray: *“Lord, open us: outward to others.”*

First open our ears. Help us to hear the happiness or sadness, the self-confidence or self-doubt of those closest to us.

And Lord, open our eyes. Help us to see a spouse’s need for a caring intervention about alcohol or an aging parent’s need for help around the house.

Also Lord, open our mouths. Help us to speak words of comfort to a neighbor who is grieving or words of challenge to a society that is caught in consumerism.

And finally Lord, open our minds. Help us to examine our judgments about people who think differently from us or our prejudice toward immigrants or whomever.

Conclusion

So, Jesus says: *“Be opened!”*

And we pray: *“Lord, open me: inward to you, outward to others.”*