

Homily of 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (09-09-18)

At that time of the prophesies of Isaiah in the first reading, worship of false gods and evil practices by kings and the people were rampant. Many of the believers in the worship of the true God were becoming fainthearted and beginning to wonder whether God had abandoned and forgotten them. The reading was a part of Isaiah's messianic prophecies, assuring the people that God had neither abandoned nor forgotten them. Isaiah prophesied to the people, "Thus says the Lord: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: be strong, fear not! Here is your God, ... he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened; the ear of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing." Jesus and his mission was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. As we see in the Gospel, the healing of the deaf man who had a speech impediment was as Isaiah prophesied.

May God come to save many countries and communities where the leadership is blind, deaf, dumb, and lame, thereby inflicting suffering on the people. May God come with vindication and with recompense for his people.

May God come to save the Catholic Church from every form of blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness, and may God save the Church from self-destruction.

May God save those who are going through various kinds of afflictions. As in the Gospel, may there be exceeding astonishment at God's saving grace. As prophesied by Isaiah, let streams burst in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. Let the burning sands become pools, and the thirsty ground become springs of water. May God's children leap like a stag in joyful dance and may there be loud proclamation of, "He has done all things well," by those liberated and those healed.

James in the second reading brings to our attention a disease that has afflicted blindness, lameness, deafness, and dumbness to many people and to our society. That is, showing partiality, making distinctions and becoming judges with evil designs. All forms of racism, discrimination, segregation, gang-ups, cliques, partiality are evil designs and ungodly.

At the heart of the ministry of Jesus is to heal humanity from division. He prayed in John 17:21, "That they may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you..." St. Paul in various ways teaches the essence of oneness, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free person, there is not male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Again in Colossians 3:11 St. Paul writes, "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and all."

Let us conclude with a Jewish wisdom story:

A Rabbi once asked his students, "How do we know when the night has ended and the day has begun?" The brightest of the students offered an answer: "When I look out at the fields and I can distinguish between my field and the field of my neighbor's, that's when the night has ended and day has begun." A second student offered her answer: "When I look from the fields and I see a house and I can tell that it's my house and not the house of my neighbor, that's when the night has ended and the day has begun." A third student offered an answer: "When I can distinguish the animals in the yard – and I can tell a cow from a horse – that's when the night has ended." "No," the Rabbi replied. "You only know how to divide! You divide your house from the house of your neighbor, your field from your neighbor's, one animal from another, one color from all the others. Is that all that we can do – divide, separate, split the world into pieces? Isn't the world broken enough - split into enough fragments? No, my dear students, it's not that way at all! Our Torah and Jewish values want more from us." The Rabbi then told them, "When you look into the face of the person who is beside you and you can see that that person is your brother or your sister, when you can recognize that person as a friend, then, finally, the night has ended and the day has begun."

May the Lord heal us from the blindness and darkness of partiality and evil designs. Amen.

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