

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time (B)
September 6, 2009

“People brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him.”

“He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.”

People bringing other people to Jesus and then, going out into the world and spreading the wonders and “all things well” that he does is the definition of evangelization.

And evangelization in the Church is simply advertising or marketing the Good News that is Jesus Christ.

In other words, through Jesus, God has shown to us His message, His hope for the world and all humanity, and even His very self.

So, those who know Jesus Christ know God the Father.

He is not some mysterious God who, after creating the world and all things within it, abandoned it and us and left us to figure things out on our own. No.

Rather, our Creator and God remains with us and continues to guide us on the path He has chosen for us and laid out for us.

And by our baptism into the paschal mystery – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – we are called to discern this path and follow it as best as we can.

Doing so will undoubtedly involve bringing others along with us.

We will be called and are called to bring people to Jesus...specifically, people who have not yet heard or accepted the truth that is Jesus Christ.

And we do so not only because Jesus himself did so first when he lived and walked among us on earth, but also because Jesus asks us to.

Jesus asks us to bring his message to others and in doing so, bring them to him.

We can see this taking place all throughout the Gospels.

In the Gospels, Jesus reaches out to the outcasts...the Samaritans, the Lepers, the Gentiles, which just happened to be the majority in the district of Decapolis.

From this then, we gather that Jesus' message is for everyone...not just the chosen people of Israel, but for all people and especially for the sick and those who have not yet heard of the Good News. And when they do hear and accept the truth that Jesus offers us, the effects are immediate.

“Immediately, the man’s ears were opened and his speech was removed so that he spoke plainly.”

The words, the actions, & the grace of Jesus take effect immediately. Not tomorrow or the next day...but, now.

We receive eternal life through Baptism now.

We receive nourishment and strength through the Holy Eucharist now.

We receive the gifts and grace of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation now.

We are forgiven through Reconciliation now.

We receive healing through being Prayed Over and Anointed now.

We are united as husband and wife in Marriage now.

All in all, the Sacramental effects take place immediately.

This is unquestionably part of that Good News that we can't help but to tell others about.

And when we do so, we naturally bring Jesus to other people while bringing those same people to Jesus.

This is evangelization and this is our shared call from God by our Baptism into the life of Christ.

We are encouraged to accept this calling, namely, to understand who Jesus Christ really is – that he's not a magician who magically heals people.

Rather, that he is the Son of God who not only forgives sins and heals the sick, but who also raises us to a new and everlasting life through his own death and resurrection.

And once we understand this, then we are to go forth and advertise to the world that we are indeed loved by God and that God wants nothing more than for us to seek Him out in our day to day living.

This message may be challenging for some to accept.

It may cause undue anxiety and worry within us.

It may even cause us to run the other way.

But, before we do so, let's remind ourselves that God will be with us every step of the way and that in reality, we have nothing to worry about.

May we all find the needed strength to evangelize – to advertise to the world of the Good News that Jesus Christ has set aside for us, the messengers of God.

And the Lord said, "Go!"

And I said, "Who me?"

And He said, "Yes, you."

And I said, "But I'm not ready yet. There's company coming and besides, I can't leave the kids. And you know there's no one to take my place."

And He said, "You're stalling."

And the Lord said, "Go!"

And I said, "I don't want to."

And He said, "I didn't ask if you wanted to."

And I said, "Listen, I'm not that kind of person to get involved in controversy or evangelization. Besides, my family won't like it. And what will my neighbors think?"

And He said, "Baloney!"

And the Lord said a third time, "Go!"

And I said, "Do I have to?"

And He said, "Do you love me?"

And I said, "Look Lord, I'm scared. People are going to hate me and cut me down into little pieces. I can't take all that by myself."

And He said, "Where do you think I'll be?"

And the Lord said, "Go!"

And I sighed... "Here I am, Lord...send me!"