

Ordinary Time 23B 2015
Hearing God's Word Anew

Think about the man in today's gospel. He has seen Jesus, but because he is deaf, he has not heard the Word of the gospel. And although he has seen the mighty works of Jesus, he cannot praise God because he cannot speak. If this man is to praise God, his ears must be opened and his tongue loosened. And so people do something for this man that he cannot do for himself; they bring him to Jesus. They bring him to Jesus because they have heard the Word of the gospel. And because they have heard the Word of the gospel, they want to share the Word they have heard with him so that he can hear and believe and praise God.

There was a moment when we were like the man of today's gospel. We could not hear the Word of the gospel, and so we could not praise God. But then someone—our parents or some other faithful witness to the gospel—brought us to Christ, and our ears were opened, and for the first time we heard the Word of the gospel. For the first time we believed. For the first time we were able to praise God.

But there are times when our ears are closed again. We are so filled with the blaring noise of daily life that we no longer hear the Word of the gospel. Or, we hear the Word in a way that no longer touches our lives. And because it no longer touches our lives, we cannot praise God. At such moments, someone must lead us to Christ once more. At such moments Christ must open our ears and loosen our tongues so that we can praise God anew.

This happens to me from time to time when I become so consumed with the ordinary business of our parish that I can no longer hear the gospel as I should. And because I no longer hear the gospel as I should, I can no longer praise God as I ought. But then someone brings me to Christ again, and I hear the Word anew,

and I praise God as if for first time. Perhaps something similar has happened to you.

There are people all around us who can no longer hear the Word of God because the noise and distractions of life block their ears. And because they cannot hear God's Word, they cannot praise the God who created and redeemed them in Jesus Christ. There are people who are so consumed with career and advancement that they can no longer hear God's Word; indeed they do not want to hear God's Word lest it judge them. There are people so consumed by the things and objects they possess that they can no longer hear God's Word. There are people who are so absorbed by the culture of our day—a culture that proclaims there is nothing beyond what we can see and touch—that they can no longer hear God's Word. And because they can no longer hear God's Word, they cannot praise the very God who created, redeemed and loves them.

So what are we, who have just heard God's Word, to do? What are we to do, we who are now praising God in this Eucharist? If we are true to the Word we have heard, if we truly find joy in the gospel we proclaim, if we want to praise God, then we, like the people of today's gospel, must bring others and each other, to Christ so that Christ will open our ears and loosen our tongues anew so that we can praise God once more.