

Readings

Is 35:4-7a

Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

Jas 2:1-5

Mk 7:31-37

Richard A. Young, O.S.A.
Providence Catholic High School
New Lenox, Illinois

My life flows on in endless song.
Above earth's lamentation
I hear the clear though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.

No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?

I was watching the news earlier and starting to lose hope. So much violence, hatred, and pain. I am grateful for the mute button on my remote; I don't have to listen to it – or deal with it. I wonder if the healed man was actually happier now that he could hear everything: not only the songs of the birds, the whisper of the wind, children's laughter, but also the village gossip, Roman belittlement, rumors of insurrection. You get the idea. Jesus returned the man to full participation in the life of the community – the good, the bad, the ugly.

In some small way, I know how the man felt. Last year age finally moved me to get hearing aids. I was beginning to miss parts of conversations, ask people to repeat, even feel a bit isolated as I tried to process what I thought I heard as conversations continued. Certainly not what the man was going through, but feeling disconnected was difficult for me. I felt a bit like an outsider. I am grateful to be able to hear more clearly again and engage in life more freely.

Is it no wonder that people were overwhelmed with what happened to the man as he was totally deaf and unable to speak without difficulty? With touch, spit, prayer and the command, *Be opened*, Jesus returned hearing and speech to this man, but even more returned the man to the community. How could they – and he – not proclaim this to all? Well, therein lies the rub.

It is easy (maybe too easy?) to consider that we are like the man who could not hear and had a speech impediment. Or is it? To summarize: we don't hear the Gospel message; we need to be healed. The issue is how that happens.

Our second reading offers a clue to a type of deafness that seems endemic to our human nature – and even in believing communities. We don't realize that even though we say we hear and are happy to proclaim the Gospel, oftentimes we do not.

Consider the favoritism offered to the well-dressed person as opposed to the poor one – and this in the assembly! That person embodied the cry of the poor. Are we deaf to the cry of the poor by our perceptions, misperceptions, prejudices and the like? Who or what else are we deaf to? Pope Francis has asked us that during September we take the time to truly hear the cry of the environment, and those who are impacted by climate change – especially the poor. Are we willing to take the risk to be cured of our deafness?

We seem quite capable of talking. What of listening? Are we proclaiming the Kingdom of God and the healing, justice and peace that it brings in a new way or are we proclaiming our own small kingdoms that continue to isolate ourselves from others – and this, on purpose?

If you notice, Jesus did not tell the healed man not to say anything. He told the crowd. I believe that is because the man experienced this healing, this new relationship, and could speak from that place of hearing in a new way. The others – not so much. They saw a miracle and a

miracle-worker. Are we the crowd – bystanders? Or are we willing to admit our deafness? Are we willing to be healed and embrace the hearing in a new way, the way Jesus and the Gospel calls us to?

I prefaced this reflection with part of the song, *How Can I Keep from Singing?* I can imagine the man singing this as he proclaims what Jesus did for him. He proclaims from a grateful heart. That's why it's good to gather at Eucharist, this gathering in thanks. We trust our God is with us as we share in this Banquet – in all our contradictions. And in this sharing, we can hear the new creation. Yes, when Love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can we keep from singing?