

Bulletin Reflection 2021.09.05. Year B1. Week 23. Ordinary Time.

‘God is working. Just don’t tell anyone.’

Jesus put his fingers into the deaf man’s ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then the Lord looked up to heaven and sighed, after which he said, ‘Ephphatha’ – ‘Be opened’. Unlike most of his other miracles, this one had a structure to it – external actions, visible signs, and a spoken formula – as if Christ was giving a little preview of what the Church’s sacraments might look like (i.e. form and matter). But if this was a departure from his *modus operandi* his command afterwards to tell no one was just as unusual. We might wonder: Why the secrecy and reticence? Why not proclaim this marvellous work from the rooftops? (C.f. Mt. 10:27) Some speculate this may have been motivated by practical reasons – for instance, to avoid a repeat of Mark 1:45, when the publicising of a leper’s cure prevented Jesus from entering towns openly. Others would read it as a sign of humility as well as necessary discretion to obviate the untimely attention of the authorities. Nevertheless, this confirms that at times the Lord may choose to work in private, behind closed doors and away from the crowd.

Like the deaf man with a speech impediment, many in our world suffer quietly without others being aware. But more importantly – as we see in the Gospel – God’s power of healing is always at work, yet often hidden from view. Admittedly, the vision of finite creatures is rather limited and habitually clouded by temptations and sin. Truth is, we all have a tunnel vision of reality, in which the more immediate concerns overshadow the distant. Likewise, we tend to gauge a hazard primarily by its impact and proximity to personal life, meaning we are far more preoccupied with our own problems than that of others. On the contrary, Jesus made the deaf man’s predicament his own, just as he would take on humanity’s sins as his own and die on the Cross. Yet he intended not to publicise this miracle, because he did it, not for man’s approval, but for the glory of his heavenly Father. Therefore, we ought to focus on the work of the Lord rather than the reaction of the people, since his grace is always at work, whether or not we realise it.

They only asked him to lay his hands on the man. But Christ exceeded their expectations by curing the man and bringing him to faith. Indeed, the Lord is far more eager to heal us than we are willing to be healed. Therefore, we must continue to hope and trust, even as his methods may at times be odd and discomforting – e.g. putting fingers into ears or touching tongues with spittle. For if we persevere with faith, love, and hope, Jesus will surely save us in the end.