

# Sunday Homily

## 23rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

5 SEPTEMBER 2021

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III

"He has done all things well."

### Illustration

James was nine, the eldest of seven children who lived in a one-bedroom flat on a poor housing estate. His mother was alcoholic and his father, who came and went, was violent. James was "closed". At school he would not take off his coat and he wore his hood over his head. He would not speak and when he communicated it was by kicking, spitting or punching. Though it was often difficult and frustrating, James' teacher refused to give up on the possibility that James could be different. She believed that though she could do nothing about his home life, school could become a safe place where there was a real possibility of growth and hope.

There are many such children in our world who suffer not only from physical poverty but from a lack of emotional well-being and care. The media tell us so many stories of people who are suffering or in trouble that we can succumb to a degree of indifference; we shut our eyes and close our ears to their pain because we feel helpless to do anything about it.

### Gospel Teaching

Isaiah proclaims with confidence that God is coming and, when that time comes, "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed". In our Gospel today that time has come. It begins with Mark describing the strange and circuitous route that Jesus has made to reach the place where he heals the man who has a double affliction with his hearing and his speech.

The reason for recording this unusual route, through pagan territories, is perhaps as an indicator of the length of time it would take for the disciples to be open to the message of Christ's teaching. Jesus was not travelling alone. The disciples were walking with him, listening to him, watching and observing his behaviour as he gradually revealed his message to them. The message of Jesus was radically different from anything they had ever experienced, and so the ability to absorb all he shared with them was never going to happen overnight.

When they reach their destination, word has already spread and people are waiting for Jesus with a man whose condition symbolises the inability of many to make sense of the world around them. When Christ takes him away from the crowd he demonstrates a profound respect for the man's dignity as a person;

and then through Christ's prayer and touch the man can at last hear and speak. The one who is healed discovers the link between what life has been and what life can be.

### Application

With James it took many weeks and months before his healing took place. As his teacher worked kindly and patiently with him, the barriers that James had built around himself started to fall away. Slowly James began to trust. His coat came off, he stopped grunting and he began to hear the teacher's gentle words of encouragement. As he allowed himself to relax, so his confidence began to grow. He started to smile and eventually his kicking and punching diminished. Within a year James' aggression had melted and he seemed to find hope and joy in living once more.

There is no one on this planet who is not in need of some healing. For some it will be physical healing, but for many it will be the healing that we need when we have been hurt by life. Sometimes we will be aware of what it is, but for some there will simply be something they find it hard to identify that causes a general feeling of distress or unhappiness. It may be a worry or an anxiety about the future or about a family member or friend. It may be because there are unresolved issues or conflicts that are gnawing away inside.

A question for us to reflect on in the coming week might be: "What is stopping me from being fully able to sing and leap with joy?" as Isaiah tells us will happen when people are released from what imprisons them. The story of Jesus healing the man who could not speak or hear is also a story for us. Can we allow ourselves to be healed of our impairment and become instruments of that healing love in our families and community? Let us pray that in the coming week the love that God has for us will be revealed and God will heal us in our need. Then we will be able to rejoice and say, "He has done all things well."