

## Homily 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2024

'The Kingdom of God – **Already present** but not yet perfect'

A good friend of mine was diagnosed clinically deaf about 25 years ago. He had to wear hearing aids all the time. Recently, a colleague invited him to a Day of Renewal in The Holy Spirit in Chertsey, near Woking. He wasn't 'into' Renewal and although he reluctantly agreed to attend, he had second thoughts on the day of The Conference. His wife convinced him that he should be open to new ways of worship and anyway he had booked his train ticket and promised his friend. During one of the sessions, he was baptised in The Spirit and later was prayed over. Whilst being prayed over for healing he very suddenly noticed that the volume of the PA system had been turned up. 'No, it's the same volume', replied his prayer partner. He remembered that he had removed his hearing aids prior to the prayer but soon also realised that his hearing had improved significantly, **he could hear clearly** without his aids.

Isaiah, in today's First Reading prophesied that the Age of The Messiah would herald a new time when the 'deaf would hear and the dumb speak.', Say to all faint hearts, 'Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, **the ears of the deaf unsealed**, then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy.

In today's Gospel Jesus cures a man who is deaf and has a speech impediment and in so doing proclaims himself The Messiah promised by Isaiah, almost 800 years before, 'And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' **And his ears were opened**, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke.....

The man had been humble before Our Lord and had faith in Jesus as The Holy One of God, The Messiah, a humility requested by The Second Reading today from Saint James. Through his friends, who requested Jesus' healing power, that healing was bestowed on him in abundance. As I have stated before the miracle itself is not as important as the message it proclaims. That message is that the New Dispensation ushered in by Jesus' Incarnation is NOW amongst us, The Time of The Messiah.

Jesus sent us The Holy Spirit as our Advocate and Helper. Through The Holy Spirit the Kingdom of God is present in the People of God today and acts to show signs that, the yet to be perfected Kingdom, is present NOW. From time to time The Holy Spirit, sent by The Father, will in the name of Jesus produce visible signs, which go beyond the known powers of nature and medical knowledge to confirm that what Jesus says is TRUE.

My friend put his trust in God and was humble and open to God's power in The Spirit and like the man in The Gospel was healed in the name of Jesus. His healing was later confirmed by an audiologist who, after checking his hearing several times, stated like the crowds in The Gospel, 'I have never seen anything like this!' The Kingdom of God is NOW, even based on scientific evidence, amongst us and will be perfected at the end of time. Of course, we knew that already by our faith in Jesus, did we not?