Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Isaiah 35:4-7

Psalm 146

James 2:1-3

Mark 7:31-17

“Ephphatha”, be opened.

I wonder what that deaf man with a speech impediment first said when he was able to speak? Dunno. Say, if Jesus came up to you and touched your ears and your mouth today, what would you say after hearing what is happening around you today? Maybe shouting is in order.

The Church, your Church, is on the brink of losing its voice about morals, right-living, the Christian life. This I fear: the loss of clerics speaking out about these things in the world. Who will listen to the priests and deacons, the bishops and pope now-a-days? I fear our forceful voice for morality in society has been weakened. Yet I hear from the bible, “Thus says the Lord: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not!”

Okay. How will the Church speak to immorality, oppressive immigration laws, the death penalty, abortion, child and elder abuse, the discord in public polity, oppressive political policies, human trafficking, the list goes on. Who will speak out? You. You are the Church and you have a voice. Ephphatha – be opened.

“Thus says the Lord: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not!”

But you consider yourselves unable to speak. You have looked to the clerics in the Church to make up your minds and be your spokesmen (emphasis on “men”). I as cleric have studied long and hard about Christian life and how it is well lived. I no longer have a voice. It isn’t that I am deaf to the world’s maladies or can’t speak well with warnings or proposals for solutions. The rug has been pulled out from under my feet. I have no standing in this world to talk about morality.

The Church must look to you to be a force in the world. But you feel yourselves too poor, or too poorly educated in these matters. The world needs your voice, now more than ever.

“Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs to the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?”

You will be the voice of Jesus in the world. Be prepared therefore to say to the world that you will be the voice who says to the world that through you as Church:

The God of Jacob keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food for the hungry. The Lord sets captives free.

The Lord gives sight to the blind; the Lord raises up those who were bowed down. The Lord loves the just; the Lord protects strangers.

The fatherless and the widow the Lord sustains, but he way of the wicked he thwarts.

The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

The world awaits your voice. Ephphatha.