

The incident in today's Gospel is found only in Mark. Now, that kind of thing is not unusual. None of the Gospels is exactly identical to another. But Mark deliberately evokes Isaiah's promise, which we hear in today's First Reading that God will make the deaf hear and the mute speak.

The crowd recognizes that Jesus is doing what the prophet had foretold. But Mark wants us to see and know something far greater. He wants us to understand that what Isaiah promised is happening now.

***“Here is your God, he comes with vindication;
with divine recompense he comes to save you”.***

Yet, there is something else, something very different about today's Gospel.

I think we can agree that this is a very personal and physical encounter with Jesus. Our Lord even takes this man away from the crowd.

Our focus is then drawn to a hand, then a finger, to ears and a tongue, even.... saliva.

In Jesus Mark shows us..... God has truly come in the flesh, and that while God certainly touches us in all aspects of our lives, Mark wants the hearer to experience and delight in God's physical reality.

This physical aspect is something we in the Church encounter very often, isn't it?

We know it in the coolness of the Holy Water, the warmth of wine, the taste of bread.

Look around us and we see flames, and wood and stone and gold and light.

Our ears are filled with His words and with songs of praise.

Our noses detect the aroma of incense and the burning of wax.

Jesus truly touches us, here, in this place, and it is so familiar, we can overlook it, can't we?

(PAUSE)

We all know that there are certain sights, sounds and smells that will always remind us of home.

Many times, **when** those who have wandered away from the Church come back, they are often drawn by the sense of belonging that the familiarity of our surroundings provides.

But while this may draw them, it is not enough to hold them. It is the Sacraments that keep them, that sustain them once they have come home to the Church, just as they sustain us.

Jesus fulfills both then and now, through the Sacraments, what Isaiah promised; what the Psalmist proclaims and what James makes known:

He has made the living waters of baptism flow in the desert of this world.

He has set captives free from their sins.

The rich and the poor, the mighty and the weak dine together in the Eucharistic feast.

Jesus makes all things new, and He continues to renew all things, through the Sacramental life of the Churchwhich enriches our faith and increases our love of God and neighbor.

For the Sacraments are much more than the ceremony; they make **real** everything that they represent.

In the touch of water and oils, the wearing of wedding rings, the words of absolution, the bread on our tongues, we tangibly experience the **reality** of cleansing, forgiveness, redemption, service, charity, love and healing.

These are the gifts of the Sacraments..... Which are the gifts of Christ to His Bride, the Church.

In **them** He has done for each of us what He did for the deaf mute.

He has opened our ears to hear His word, and loosed our tongues that we might sing our praises to Him.

Our senses are awakened, and we, like the crowds in the Gospel cannot keep silent.

(short PAUSE)

Let us then, in all that we do give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us echo the Psalmist, "Praise the Lord my soul"

Let us say with Isaiah, Here is our God, He comes, this day, to save us.

And along with St. James, let us be rich in faith, that we might inherit the kingdom promised to those who love Him.