

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 6, 2015

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on the Gospel Reading for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

SPEAKING NEEDS HEARING

In order to speak well, we need to hear well. We learn how to speak by listening to words and imitating the sounds we hear.

Infants hear their parents talking to them and eventually they begin to reproduce the sounds they are hearing. At about twelve months, babies can usually say a few simple words like "mama" and "dada." By the age of two, babies can string together some words, and by the age of three, their vocabulary expands rapidly.

But things do not progress in that way if a baby has hearing problems. A baby who is deaf or hearing-impaired cannot reproduce sounds that he or she cannot hear or hear accurately. Hearing problems lead to speaking problems.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 7:31-37), people bring Jesus "a deaf man who had a speech impediment." While his speech impediment may have had a physical cause, it was more than likely his difficulty in speaking was caused by the fact he could not hear. How could he pronounce words that he was unable to hear and to imitate?

In the Gospel we are told Jesus "put his finger into the man's ears" and then he touched his tongue. "And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly."

Jesus first opens the man's ears and then the man speaks plainly. With good hearing comes good speaking.

The same thing holds true when it comes to speaking about our Christian faith. As disciples of Jesus we have the responsibility to tell others about Jesus and about the good news of the Gospel. However, we cannot effectively do that unless we ourselves have first heard and understood the words of Jesus.

We hear his words as the Gospel is proclaimed at Mass. We hear them explained during the homily. We learn more about their application to our lives through the example of faithful Christians. And we come to a deeper understanding of their meaning through the teaching of the Church. In all these ways Jesus opens our ears so that his words, his teachings, will find a place in our minds and hearts.

If that does not happen, then our words about the Gospel will sound false. We will speak with a "speech impediment" that keeps others from accepting the message of Jesus Christ that we are trying to share.

If we want our words of faith to be understood by others, we first need to hear and understand them ourselves.