Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 7:31-37): Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!"— that is, "Be opened!" — And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

"The people begged him to lay his hand on him"

Fr. Fernando MIGUENS Dedyn
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Today, the liturgy takes us to contemplate the healing of a "deaf man who had a speech impediment" (Mk 7:32). As in other cases (the Bethsaida and Jerusalem blind men, etc.), the Lord surrounds the miracle with a series of outward motions. In such miracles, the Fathers of the Church see the overemphasized harmonic involvement of the Humanity of Christ. An involvement developed in a double way: one, the "abasement" and the closeness to us of the Verb incarnated (the touch of his fingers, the depth of his gaze, his sweet and intimate voice); on the other hand, the attempt to awaken in the man the confidence, the faith and the conversion of his heart.

The cures of the sick Jesus carries through mean indeed much more than merely relieving the pain or recovering the health. They are meant to achieve that those He loves overcome their blindness, their deafness or their stagnant immobility of the spirit. And, ultimately, a true communion of faith and love.

At the same time, we can see how the grateful reaction of the recipients of this divine gift is to proclaim God's mercy: "the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it" (Mk 7:36). They bear witness of the divine gift, they deeply experience his mercy and are full of a deep and genuine gratitude.

For all of us it is also of crucial importance to know and feel that we are loved by God, the certitude we are the object of his infinite mercy. This is the driving force of generosity and love God is requesting from us. Many are the ways that will carry us to make this discovery. Sometimes, it will be the intense and

sudden experience of the miracle and, quite often too, the gradual discovery that all our life is nothing but a miracle of love. In any case, it is necessary we first realize our own indigence, with a true humility and the capacity to listen reflexively to God's voice.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “We are confused by the realization that, although we are good by nature, as created in the image of God, we are, however, bad because of our actions.” (Saint Lawrence of Brindisi)

- “‘Ephphatha!’ the same order is now addressed to the inner man, so that he may open himself to the divine mysteries, through the light of faith, through love, hope.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “... Christ's compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me." (Mt 25:36) His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1503)