

23rd Sunday of the Year B cycle homily 9-6-15

The key Question in today's gospel: WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM? I need your help with today's homily.

Whenever I ask, WHAT DOES THE CROWD WANT TO KNOW? You say, WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM?

Today's gospel passage from the Gospel of Mark comments on Jesus' long ministerial journey. We hear he is traveling from Tyre by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee. That is like going to Toledo by way of Lansing! The trip would take from 8 to 12 months by foot. His disciples walked with him, and were learning from him. In the gospel we are all journeying with Jesus.

In today's gospel passage, the crowd brings Jesus a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment and begged him to lay hands on him.

The crowd: have heard of Jesus' power to heal; they have heard about the healing of the woman with the flow of blood and their raising of the child who was dead. They want to see it first person. WHAT DOES THE CROWD WANT TO KNOW?

: WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM!

The word on the street is that Jesus just puts his hands on people and they get healed. They want to be amazed by Jesus. What the crowd seeks is not unlike a crowd at a tent revival; they want to see physical healing. They want to be amazed. Over and over they are amazed.

WHAT DOES THE CROWD WANT TO KNOW? ... WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM?

Jesus is not concerned about revealing where his strength comes from. So he lets the crowd stew in their questioning. He is not about to embarrass the man with a disability in front of so many gawking onlookers. He takes the man aside, thrusts his fingers into the man's ears, takes spittle and places it on his tongue. Spittle used as a healing agent. Spittle from the inside of one person to the other, Then he looks up to heaven.

Remember the first time in the Mark's gospel when he looked up into the heavens. It was at the time of his baptism by John the clouds parted, he looked up into the heavens and heard the voice of his father saying, this is my beloved son; in him I am well pleased. The knowledge that he is loved by his Father at his baptism PROPELS Jesus into his healing ministry.

WHAT DOES THE CROWD WANT TO KNOW? ... WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM?

Jesus strength comes from knowing that he is loved by the Father.

But there is more to the answer to the question of where his strength comes from than that he simply experiences the love of the Father

And so after having recalled he is the beloved son of the Father, Jesus and groans, and says "Ephphata, be opened! Immediately the man's ears are opened and his speech impediment is removed. The people who become conscious of Jesus' healing power and they begin to PROCLAIM TO EVERYONE that he has done all things well.

AND WHAT DOES THE CROWD WANT TO KNOW: WHERE DOES JESUS' STRENGTH COME FROM?

Jesus' strength comes from his consciousness of being loved by God and being the bearer of the Holy Spirit into a world of suffering and alienation.

That gospel insight should mean a lot to us. It helps us focus on the very purpose and mission of the church, the disciples of Christ. It means that the church does exist to be not a country club to please its members. By our own baptism, we are his adopted sons and daughters. Conscious of being loved by the Father, we too are called to be bearers of the Holy Spirit into a world of suffering and alienation.

example: Funeral on Saturday;

- **Not a member of the parish**
- **Not even baptized**
- **Why should we take it?**

Our strength and faith comes from a growing consciousness that we are loved by God and that we are bearers of the Holy Spirit in a world of suffering and alienation.

Examples: parents

Children in school

Neighborhoods

Richest country in the world

Why be part of faith formation programs?

May the source of Jesus' strength be ours today: a strength and faith comes from a growing consciousness that we are loved by God and that through the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and that we too are bearers of the Holy Spirit in a world of suffering and alienation.

May we always rejoice in knowing the source of our strength and have the grace to be bearers of the Holy Spirit in whatever part of the world we touch which is suffering and alienated. May the force of the Father's love be with you.