

HOMILY~ 23rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SEPTEMBER 7/8, 2024

I have seen that video a dozen times, and it still makes me laugh. Do you think the two people in this video can hear each other? I think they can. Are they really listening to one another? I do not think so. In the Gospel Reading, a deaf man with a speech impediment came to Jesus begging Jesus to heal him. Jesus restored his hearing and removed his speech impediment. Did you notice that Jesus said, "**Be opened.**" He did not say, "*May your hearing be restored*" or "*You will now be able to speak plainly.*" He said, "**Be opened.**" Most of us here today can hear and speak, but are we open to one another in our hearing and our speech? I think the message that Jesus is giving us today is to **be opened** in our hearing and in our speech.

Let us get back to the video. They can hear each other, but they are not open to each other. The woman wants to tell her story. Sometimes we just need someone to listen to our story, really understand us and empathize with us. The man in the video is not picking this up. Even when he says, something that seems as though he is sympathizing with her, it does sound condescending. He wants to move right to solving the problem, as many of us men like to do. The cause of her problem seems evident, she has a nail sticking out of her forehead; and he cannot quite get past that, and understandably so. That may or may not be the problem, but let us grant him that. To keep pointing out the problem may not be helpful at all. If she has looked in the mirror, she knows the nail is there. How did the nail get there? Can the nail be removed? Does it involve a risky surgery?

Let us take a more real life situation. Maybe the cause of my problem is that I was abused as a child. If it is, I need to work through it, I need to heal and I need to forgive. It will be a very long process. For someone to just repeatedly point out the problem is not helpful. **Be opened** to each other's needs.

Let us change the scenario a little. Instead of a nail sticking out of her head, let us say it is an image of a political candidate that you oppose on her forehead, or maybe an image of a political

candidate that you support. Do you think this will affect the conversation? If it is an image of a candidate you oppose, this could be identified as an insurmountable problem with your communication. If it is a candidate you support, this could enhance your communication. If we are opened to one another, we need to be aware of our biases, set them aside and listen. In reality, does the image of a political candidate on her forehead tell you if she is for, against, or neutral to the candidate? Not really. You could be jumping to conclusions. I think we sometimes do this. I get two sentences out, and you judge me and think you know a whole lot about me. Has this ever happened to you? Or sometimes someone gets two sentences out, and I tell them I know exactly how they feel, and I proceed to tell them what they feel? It may not be what they feel at all. I have just made it all about me. We need to **be opened** to one another and not jump to conclusions.

So many things today have become so politically charged, and we sometimes react in an emotional way. When I find myself doing this, I am usually not communicating very well. In fact, what I say may not really be what I mean; and it may sound a little crazy, you know what I mean? You may point that out, *“Jim that sounds crazy.”* Of course pointing that out does not enhance our communication; in fact, I am probably not listening to you at all. In these situations, I try to just be silent and say nothing. I try to **be opened**. In reality, listening to different points of view enhances my understanding. I may not change my opinion, but I can better understand yours. In reality, the solution is probably not one extreme or the other, it is probably somewhere in the middle. In our interactions with the people we meet every day. **“Be opened.”**

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim