



# The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

31 August 2021



## **HEALING OUR WOUNDS AND BROKENNESS: 23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY B**

**Isaiah 35:4-7a; James 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37**

Every time we find ourselves listening to the stories of God at Mass, we need to ask ourselves two questions: - 1. Where am I in the story? And 2. Where are we in the story? Let's apply that now to the story we hear today about the healing by Jesus of a disabled man, disabled by being both deaf and dumb.

Our first response to this story might be: "Well, I'm not deaf, and I'm not dumb. I'm not disabled. Or if I am, not much! So, what's the story got to do with me?" The fact is, we've all got limitations, we've all got defects, and we've all got wounds. Just because ours are not as visible and as obvious as that of the man in the gospels, doesn't mean we are simply perfect – whole and complete in every way.

In one way or another, we are all wounded and hurting. We see this in husbands who take refuge in work because they are no longer attracted to their wives. We see it in wives who are wounded by a lack of attention and affection from their husbands. We see it in parents who are fighting and arguing with one another or with their children. We see it in children who are not getting the love they need, or who are feeling smothered by 'helicopter parents' hovering too closely over them.

Some people carry deep wounds from bad experiences as a child. Others are wounded by sickness, or by the death of a loved one. Some are wounded by the infidelity of their partner, or by not being able to accept themselves as they are. Some are wounded by failures at work or in relationships. Others are wounded by being unable to forgive or forget. Some are wounded by being rejected by someone they love, or from nagging or bullying. Some of us are more wounded than others. But our deepest wounds may be invisible. Inside each of us, there might be a whole hidden world of hurt and pain.

With some people, their inner wounds have driven them to drugs, drink, depression or pornography, or a combination of all of these. In others, their inner wounds have led to a compulsion to prove themselves, to appear successful, to win, to dominate, to show off, and even perhaps to an obsession with helping and saving others – to acting out a kind of "messiah complex."

On the road to healing, the first step is to own that we are indeed wounded and hurting. Counselling with a caring therapist or even deep and conversations with a trusted friend may help us find the source of our frustration and put us on the road to recovery.

But no matter what our wounds are, what needs healing most of all is our heart, our mental and emotional outlook. If only our hearts could change, we could move on and give so much more to our relationships. But as a result of particularly painful experiences, our hearts are often left empty, cold and unwelcoming, hard and unyielding, and weighed down with frustration, worry and anxiety. Maybe we even find ourselves struggling to mend a broken heart?

We should not be surprised by any of this. It means simply that we are human beings with hearts of flesh, not hearts of stone. Just the same, our wounded hearts ache to be relieved and healed, so that we might find freedom and deliverance, love and peace, joy and contentment.

This miracle Jesus did on that deaf and dumb man reminds us that hearing is a precious gift. But it is only with the heart, a heart like the heart of Jesus, that we can hear what is hurting others most of all. The cry of someone in need may reach our ears, but if it does not touch our hearts, we will not feel that person's pain, and we will not do anything about it. The miracle that Jesus worked reminds us too that the gift of speech is a precious gift. But if our words are not heart-felt, they will be empty, hollow, and a waste of time.

In touching the ears and tongue of that disabled sufferer, Jesus also touched his wounded heart. It was that touch, more than anything else, which made him a different person, a new man. That was the real miracle. It's the same for us. So, for the healing of our wounded, damaged, or broken hearts, we must look to Jesus, just as Pope Francis has advised. He says:

If there are times when you experience sadness, depression, negative feelings, I would ask you to look at Christ crucified. Look at his face. He sees us; in his eyes, there is a place for us. We can all bring to Christ our wounds, our pain, our sins. In his wounds, there is a place for our own wounds. There they can be soothed, washed clean, changed, and healed. He died for us, for me, so that he could stretch out his hand and lift us.

We must also be ready to look to other human beings, persons who can and will put us together again, who can and will put us on the road to recovery. In this great work, we can experience them as agents of Jesus - the greatest healer there ever was – healer of wounded, disabled, and broken people - of people like us, people like you and me.

To give an example (borrowed from Richard Leonard SJ)! A baby girl was seriously ill in a hospital ICU. The paediatric specialist said there was very little hope. Michael, the baby's five-year-old brother, kept begging his parents to let him see his sister. "I want to sing to her," he kept saying. Children were not allowed in the ICU, but eventually his mother's persistence prevailed. When Michael reached his sister's cradle, he sang to her: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are grey." The nurse reported that as Michael sang, the baby's pulse rate began to come down and become steady. "Keep on singing, Michael," encouraged his mother with tears in her eyes. He sang on: "You never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away." The baby recovered and left the hospital three weeks later.

May the passion of Jesus Christ, and his everlasting love, be always within our minds and hearts!

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