

Using All Our Senses

Intro. On my usual Thursday visits to the rehab centers in Green Cove, I asked the activities director about one of the residents. She told me the woman lost her hearing, but she could follow facial expressions and speak fine. When I walked into her room, she said, “You’re a Catholic priest, aren’t you?” (I was dressed like one.) I didn’t have to say anything; I just smiled and nodded yes. We understood each other just fine. To tell her my name I had to write it on a piece of paper. She told me that she had survived one of the recent hurricanes and lost her hearing because of injuries. I asked if we could pray. When I started to make the sign of the cross so did she. She prayed in silence while I aloud. As I left her room I thought we didn’t have much difficulty communicating at all.

1. On one of his journeys, some people brought their friend for the Lord to heal. If we look at the map in the back of most bibles, we see the Lord is clearly in Gentile territory. So how do Gentiles find out about a Jewish guy from Nazareth who might be able to heal this man? By the oldest ways of communication

(before twitter and texting): word of mouth, one person telling another. When we meet people from another place it is still common today to ask what’s going on where they’re from. Word about a man who was a powerful speaker and who could heal people got around the area in a hurry.

The Lord’s response to the request was his usual. He didn’t tell the man, “Sorry, I came only for the Israelites.” What *was* unusual was for him to take the man away from the crowds for the healing. Why not use the man and the healing to impress the crowd? The healing was for the *man*, not for the crowd. It was between a man who wanted to be healed and a man who could heal him. The Lord telling the man not to “speak” about it seems to show the healing was not to show the crowd how great the Lord was. And the Lord never “used” somebody for any purpose, much less to make himself important.

The Lord *touched* the man’s ears and his tongue. He could have stretched his hands over the man and healed him just as easily. The Lord made a habit of touching the people he healed. He resisted the cultural

prohibition that touching someone who was sick, or different or wasn't perfect made the person "unclean." To heal, a doctor often touches the affected part. We know a gentle touch at the right moment can communicate more than any word.

Concl. In the rite of Baptism there is a prayer for the child that says, "The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the mute speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father." A commentary on the ritual reads, "Through our five senses we experience life. Christ opens us to the reality of the whole world, to all situations, giving them a new meaning. If we are more aware, we will be more sensitive towards our neighbors. Christ wants us to grow daily by the use of our senses" [Bilingual Rite of Baptism, Provisional, Mexican-American Cultural Center, San Antonio, TX, 1979].

When we don't have one of our senses – hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch - the others are sometimes sharpened as we compensate for the loss.

What if we *intentionally* "sharpened" **all our senses** to be more aware of God's presence and became more sensitive to the needs of one another?

We might open our hearts to listen to friends and neighbors who disagree with us. We might speak up when we see someone being disrespected because of a perceived "disability." We might defend someone when we hear them being gossiped about. We might use **all** forms of communication *positively* to spread the word of healing through the Lord. Wouldn't that be something!

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September 9, 2018