

HOMILY 23RD SUN OT YRB 2018

A young adult told me a story recently. His name is Spike. He had just gone away to college. The first Sunday he was there, he decided to go to Mass. He googled the closest Catholic Church, got the Mass times and went. He had a little trouble finding the church so he was late and Mass had already started. He was dressed in blue jeans and a t shirt. His nose and lip were pierced and he had a couple of tattoos. He fit right in at college but when he walked into church he realized he was out of his element. Everyone was dressed very conservatively, and everyone looked a lot older than him. His first thought was to leave, but he decided to get a seat in the back, but there were a lot of good Catholics there so there was no room in the back. He proceeded to walk down the center aisle. He felt as though eye in the church was on him. No one was moving over to make room for him, and when he got to the front of the church he was not sure what to do so he just sat down on the floor. An elderly gentleman dressed in a suit and tie sitting in the back got up and proceeded down the aisle. Now all eyes in the church were on him. What was he going to do? At this point, even the priest stopped and is waiting for the gentleman to do what he is going to do before he started his homily. When the man got to the front church he sat down on the floor right next to Spike.

In the second reading today, James was observing that the people were treating people with gold rings and fine cloths better that poor people with shabby cloths. He is telling them to show no partiality. While we are not all the same, we are all equal in dignity as human persons, and we sometimes need to be reminded of that. We may treat people who appear to be wealthy better than we treat the poor. Maybe it is because we think we can gain something from associating with the rich. Maybe it is because we are afraid or uncomfortable with the poor. I think we need to be aware of who we approach and welcome and who we just avoid. I think in general the more someone appears to be like me, the more comfortable I feel welcoming and approaching them. Today I want to challenge you to reach out to

people that are not just like you. Some of the most interesting conversations I have are with people who are not like me. I usually learn something. I think we need to reach out to teens. Sometimes we make a fuss over the little kids, but once they reach those teen age years they get ignored. Would you have reached out to welcome Spike? Reach out to people who come to church alone. Introduce them to the people you are with. Invite them to go to coffee and donuts or the spaghetti dinner with you. Very few people would walk into those social situations alone. You generally sit around the same people every week Mass, get to know their names and call them if you do not see them in church for a couple of weeks. Everyone's names and phone numbers are in our directory. How good would it make you feel to get one of those calls? Sometimes we avoid people if they are going through a difficult time, a divorce, a difficult medical diagnosis, having chemo therapy. Maybe we do not want to intrude or I do not know what to say. I say intrude a little more.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus cured the man who was deaf and mute. Most of us here can hear and speak, but maybe we need some healing to. Sometimes we avoid certain people and situations because we don't know what to say. The first thing we need to do is really hear the person, really listen. Many times people just need to be heard and you really do not need to say anything. If you really listen to someone you will know what to say, and God will help you. How many people would be here with you today if you had just invited them? How many more people would we have at our social gatherings if someone had included them? How many more volunteers would we have if we asked them to join in our ministries? Many people are ready and willing to help but are waiting to be asked. How many people are still searching spiritually because you have not shared your faith with them? Listen and speak. Do we need Jesus' help more than that deaf and mute man?