

11th Sunday after Pentecost 5 August 2018

“He has done all things well. He has made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.”

Mk. 7:37

Today’s Gospel from St. Mark (7:31-37) gives us a most unusual miracle that Jesus performed in the land of the Gentiles beyond Galilee. It is a symbolic foreshadowing of the call of the Gentiles to Baptism by the Apostles after Jesus’ Ascension. Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book on the liturgy, *The Liturgical Year, Vol. II*, points to the miraculous cure of the deaf and dumb man as a prefigure of the salvation offered to all pagans before the coming of Jesus Christ: “The holy fathers tell us that this man represents the entire human race, exclusive of the Jewish people. Abandoned for four thousand years in the sides, that is, the countries of the north, where the prince of this world (Satan) was ruling as absolute master (cf. Is. 14:13), it has been experiencing terrible effects of the seeming forgetfulness on the part of the creator and Father, which was the consequence of original sin. Satan, whose perfidious craftiness caused man to be driven out of Paradise, has made him his prey, and nothing could exceed the artifice he has employed for keeping him in his grasp.” Gueranger, p. 282 Only with God’s grace could man overcome the wiles of Satan. Fr. Gabriel in his book of meditations, *Divine Intimacy*, speaks of man’s cooperation with divine grace: “Today’s Mass, and especially the Epistle (I Cor. 15:1-10) offers us a splendid model of cooperation with grace. St. Paul, the Apostle, who in his humility calls himself ‘the least of the Apostles,’ (I Cor. 15:9) says most sincerely: ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace in me has not been void.’ (I Cor. 15:10). St. Paul realized that, if he became an Apostle, instead of a persecutor which he had been, it was not because of his own merits, but solely by the grace of God; he attributes nothing to himself, but all to God.” Fr. Gabriel, p. 799. Both Fr. Gabriel and Dom Gueranger see the cure of the deaf mute as a symbol of the spiritual transformation in all men through the grace of Baptism.

Enslavement of the Pagan World

Dom Gueranger shows how Satan enslaved the pagan world by making it *deaf* and *dumb* before the coming of Christ. “Wisely oppressing his slave, he adopted the plan of making him deaf and dumb, for this would hold him faster than chains of adamant could ever do. *Dumb*, he could not ask God to deliver him; *deaf*, he could not hear the divine voice; and thus the two ways for obtaining his liberty were shut against him. The adversary of God and man, Satan, may boast of his tyranny. The grandest of all God’s creations looks like a failure; the human race, in all its branches, and in all nations, seems ruined; for even that people which God had chosen for His own, and which was to be faithful to Him when every other had gone astray, has made no other use of its privileges than to deny its Lord and its King, more cruelly than all the rest of mankind.

“What, then? Is the bride, whom the Son of God came to seek upon earth—is the society of saints, to be limited to those few who declared themselves his disciples during the years of his mortal life? Not so; the zeal of the newly formed Church, and the ineffable goodness of God, produced a far greater result. Driven from Jerusalem, as her divine Spouse had been, the Church met the poor captive of Satan beyond the boundaries of Judea; she would bring him into the kingdom of God: and, through the apostles and their disciples, she brings him to Jesus, beseeching Him to lay His divine hand upon him. No human power could effect this cure. Deafened by the noise of his passions, it is only in a confused way that he can hear even the voice of his own conscience; and as to the sound of tradition, or the speaking of the prophets, they are to him but as an echo, very distant and faint. Worst of all, as his hearing, that most precious of senses, is gone, so likewise, is gone the power of making good his losses; for as the apostle teaches, the one thing that could save him is faith, and faith cometh by hearing (cf. Rom. 10:17). Gueranger, p.283-4

“Ephpheta...Be thou opened.” Mk. 7:34

“Our Jesus *groans* when they have brought this poor creature before him. He is grieved at seeing the cruelties the enemy has inflicted on this His own privileged being, this beautiful work, of which He Himself served as a model and type to be the blessed Trinity, at the beginning of the world (cf. Gen. 1:26). Raising

up to heaven those eyes of his sacred Humanity....He, as God and as the Word, utters the mighty word of restoration: *'Ephpheta! Be thou opened!'* Mk. 7: 34)... the ears of the poor sufferer are *opened*, joyfully *opened* to the teachings, which his delighted mother, the Church, pours into them. She is all the gladder, because it is her prayers that have won this deliverance; and he, to whom faith comes now through hearing, finding that his *tongue* can speak, speaks, or rather sings, a canticle of praise to his God." Gueranger, p. 284

"And taking him aside from the crowd..."
Mk. 7:33

Jesus cures the body for the sake of the soul. Dom Gueranger tells us: *"...He took him apart—apart, so to say, from the multitude of the noisy passions and the vain thoughts which had made him deaf to heavenly truths. After all, would there be much good in curing him if the occasion of his malady were not removed, and he were to relapse perhaps that same way? So, then, having by this separation taken precautions for the future, Jesus inserts into the man's ears His own divine fingers which bring the Holy Ghost (cf. Lk. 11:20) and make to penetrate right to the ears of his heart the restorative power of this Spirit of love. And finally, more mysteriously, because the truth which was to be expressed is more profound, He touches with the saliva of His sacred mouth the tongue which had become incapable of giving glory and praise; and Wisdom (for it is she that is here mystically signified)—Wisdom, 'that cometh forth from the mouth of the Most High,' (cf. Eccclus. 24:5), and flows for us from the Saviour; fountains (cf. Is. 12:3) as a life-giving drink (cf. Eccclus. 15:3) openeth the mouth of the dumb man, just as she maketh eloquent the tongues of speechless infants (cf. Wisd. 10:21)."* Gueranger, p. 285

Baptismal Graces

Both Dom Gueranger and Fr. Gabriel equate the curing of the deaf and dumb man to the Sacrament of Baptism. Dom Gueranger tells us: *"The priest, before pouring the water of the sacred font on the person who is presented for Baptism, puts on the catechumen's tongue the salt of wisdom, and touches his ears saying: 'Ephpheta! ... Be opened!'"* Gueranger, p. 285 Fr. Gabriel comments: *"The healing of the deaf mute,*

as narrated in today's Gospel (Mk. 7:31-37), is a figure of baptismal grace. We, too, were once taken before Jesus in a condition similar to that of the poor man in Galilee. We were deaf and dumb in the life of the spirit, and Jesus, in the person of the priest, welcomed us lovingly at the baptismal font." Fr. Gabriel, p. 798. Little did the bystanders realize how far-reaching, with all nations until the end of time, were their words about Jesus after this miracle: *"He has done all things well. He has made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."* Mk. 7:37

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Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty

The First Saturday: 4 August 2018

Our Lady told Sr. Lucia in 1925 **"...I promise to assist at the hour of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me."** If only we would do what Our Lady asks, we would be assured of eternal salvation. Our Lady promises us all the graces necessary for our salvation if we keep *The Five First Saturdays!*