

XII TRINITY 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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II COR. 3.4 ST. MARK 7.31



Wake up soul...stretch those nerves...this is no time to be lazy...we have work to do!

There is a common theme in today's hymns...labor and hard work. It's perfectly OK for us to want to take time off from our secular work. God worked for six days and then had a day of rest...we need our rest too.

The irony in today's hymns...and yes...their choice for Labor Day weekend is intentional...is the clear message they deliver...there is no such thing as taking time off from being the Church...it is our work...we should do our work with great joy and enthusiasm.

Since its founding almost 40 years ago the healing ministry has been an important part of the life and work of Saint Joseph Parish...we pray individually and collectively for healing of mind, body and soul...for ourselves and for others...and that work must never stop. And laying on of hands for healing is available at any time for those who ask for it...it's part of the priest's work...and follows Saint James' instructions.

Unfortunately, there is the tendency to think prayer is some sort of magic show...that the more we pray...or the more people we get to pray with us or for us...or the longer we keep people on the Intentions List...the more likely God will pay attention and take action.

We don't have prayers for healing to get God's attention...we already have that...we do so because we know God hears our prayers and we trust in him to take care of our needs...including healing...for ourselves and for others...our work starts with trusting God to do what's best for us.

We have always included prayers for healing during the Mass. We don't need to know specifics...what matters is we continue to pray for them...not because it's a magic show...but to increase their faith and ours. In the Prayer for the Church we pray for all of those "who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity."

In the Gospel, a man who is "deaf and could hardly speak" wants Jesus to heal him. Because he can't hear...his speech would be difficult to understand. He faces enormous challenges every day...few people would have wanted to be around someone they thought was being punished by God. Even fewer would have wanted to offer him work.

He does have some friends who are willing to look beyond his disability and try to help him...they bring him to Jesus and beg him to lay his hands on him and heal him. The man may have been afraid or embarrassed to ask Jesus himself to heal him...so he relies on his friends to make the connection.

Jesus takes the man aside to a private place...away from the curious crowd...he does not want to turn this into a magic show or a circus...this was not about Jesus...this was about a man who needed healing and a restored life.

Jesus looks up to heaven and speaking in Aramaic...his native tongue...he says to the man..."Ephphatha"... "open up your ears and hear...open up your mouth and speak". The man is able to hear and speak clearly. Jesus gave the man more than restored health...he could hear and speak without a problem...better than new!

The Gospel tells us Jesus let out a deep groan when he healed the man...just as he did when he encountered the ten men with a skin disease. Jesus experiences intense emotion when he sees people suffering...and he wants to restore us to wholeness.

When Jesus healed the man in today's Gospel he made two Old Testament prophecies come true. Isaiah wrote, "The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear. The lame will leap and dance, and those who cannot speak will shout for joy." And Ezekiel wrote, "That same day you will get back the power of speech, and you will talk." God has repeatedly shown us his infinite capacity for compassion and mercy.

Trusting God to do what's best for us and doing his work...go hand-in-hand. Oh...and Happy Labor Day...let's get busy...no time for rest...we have work to do!

