

Faith formation



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

On this **23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time** in the Gospel Jesus touches the ears of a deaf man and says, Ephphatha, that is “be opened.”

It must have been wonderful to hear sounds – people, birds, above all the voice of Jesus himself. But it also must have been a lot of work to begin learning the meaning of so many words – and to distinguish that which requires attention from that which one can ignore.

Likewise, when Jesus touches you and me, it does not mean that all of a sudden we know everything and can start correcting others. No, that is when we must begin in earnest to listen to him – read the Bible, Catechism, Vatican II documents and other sources of his teaching.

Only after we have listened to Jesus, should we speak. And we need to ask him to touch our lips before we do. Prior to proclaiming the Gospel, the priest prays quietly: “*Almighty God, cleanse my heart and my lips that I may worthily proclaim your Gospel.*” That’s a prayer we could all say before attempting to speak on behalf of the Lord.

At the conclusion of the Gospel, before giving the homily, the priest says (inaudibly) “*May the words of the Gospel wipe away our sin.*” Always essential to recognize one’s own sin – and that our goal is not to condemn, but to offer liberation from sin.

Like each one of us, I would be a fool if I did not recognize I need correction. But how and when is it helpful? Once I was doing something in the parish which I thought was OK. A man approached me at a moment when I did not have a hundred distractions, expressed his concern in a kindly manner and showed me an appropriate document. While I was not happy to be corrected (who is?) I appreciated his thoroughness, thought about what he said and made an appropriate change. It also helped that I knew him as a prayerful man who cares about me and loves the parish.

My dear friends, as we begin a new school year 2021-2022 at St. Joseph Catholic School, we refocus on our purpose, why we are here. This month we begin our Parish faith formation program, youth group gatherings and RCIA program. For us, faith formation involves every member of our parish - seniors, parents, young adults, youth and children. Faith formation is about listening to the Lord. I encourage you to take it seriously. **To sign up and participate, please contact our hardworking Parish Staff members: Liliana Ronderos (Director of Religious Education/DRE), Erica Lesak (Youth Coordinator) and Mary Kay Arroyo (RCIA) for more information. Their email addresses are on page 2 of our Parish bulletin.**

Finally, I have a dream for our St. Joseph Parish. That dream was expressed by Isaiah: that God would speak to our hearts, telling us not to be frightened. To believe that he alone has the power to save us. That he can open our eyes and ears. That as Jesus healed the deaf man - and gave him a voice, he will help each of us listen to him.

Have a Blessed Week!

Rev. Rafal Ligenza

Pastor — St. Joseph Parish