

Sunday Homily

23rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

5 SEPTEMBER 2021

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III

“He has done all things well.”

Illustration

James was nine, the eldest of seven children who lived in a one-bedroom flat on a poor housing estate. His mother was alcoholic and his father, who came and went, was violent. James was “closed”. At school he would not take off his coat and he wore his hood over his head. He would not speak and when he communicated it was by kicking, spitting or punching. Though it was often difficult and frustrating, James’ teacher refused to give up on the possibility that James could be different. She believed that though she could do nothing about his home life, school could become a safe place where there was a real possibility of growth and hope.

There are many such children in our world who suffer not only from physical poverty but from a lack of emotional well-being and care. The media tell us so many stories of people who are suffering or in trouble that we can succumb to a degree of indifference; we shut our eyes and close our ears to their pain because we feel helpless to do anything about it.

Gospel Teaching

Isaiah proclaims with confidence that God is coming and, when that time comes, “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed”. In our Gospel today that time has come. It begins with Mark describing the strange and circuitous route that Jesus has made to reach the place where he heals the man who has a double affliction with his hearing and his speech.

The reason for recording this unusual route, through pagan territories, is perhaps as an indicator of the length of time it would take for the disciples to be open to the message of Christ’s teaching. Jesus was not travelling alone. The disciples were walking with him, listening to him, watching and observing his behaviour as he gradually revealed his message to them. The message of Jesus was radically different from anything they had ever experienced, and so the ability to absorb all he shared with them was never going to happen overnight.

When they reach their destination, word has already spread and people are waiting for Jesus with a man whose condition symbolises the inability of many to make sense of the world around them. When Christ takes him away from the crowd he demonstrates a profound respect for the man’s dignity as a person;