

## Just as I imagined...

*Have you ever imagined what it would be like to hear no sound? You would see the BEAUTIFUL summer colors, you could feel the WARMTH on your skin, smell and taste that DELICIOUS sour patch ice cream—but you would not hear anything.*

Recently, I saw a video of a person with a hearing disability trying on cochlear implants and hearing sound for the first time.

With all the babies who experienced sound for the first time, there was a **look of shock, confusion** but eventually they experienced *awe and delight* at **the sound of their mother for the first time**. When the adults with the hearing disability were able to hear for the first time, you could see *the surprise and excitement wash over their face* and then it would HIT them—a WHOLE NEW REALITY that was *hitherto unknown to them* has now been opened and NEW, MELODIOUS music and sounds begin to **trickle** and **dance** in their ear. One of the adults heard the sound of a saxophone for the first time and she began to weep. She said: ***“it sounds the way I had always imagined it!”***

*The power of hearing involves more than just the reception of noise. After being able to hear sound, the adults DID NOT say to the doctor: ‘thank you for allowing me to be able to receive 150 hz of sound waves into my ear!’ No, listening involved hearing **the voice of a beloved** whose words traveled THROUGH their ears but *pierced deep into the heart.**

**When we truly hear, we encounter the voice of the Other and this voice of the Other tells us who we are—if we have the ears to listen.**

With that insight in mind you could imagine how the man who was deaf and mute in our Gospel reacted to being able to hear FOR THE FIRST TIME. Imagine what he would have heard: **the birds chirping, the breeze in the air**, but more importantly, the first sound he literally heard was the voice of the Son of God. *“Can you hear me? What does it feel like?”* And as Jesus is speaking to him, this man is weeping with TEARS OF JOY **so much so** that even though Jesus commanded him not to speak, he COULD NOT CONTAIN IT within himself and with the people that they proclaimed this mighty deed ALL THE MORE.

This man understood in his heart the significance of this healing. He realized that ***it was more than just hearing sound***; now he can hear the *voices of the ones he loves tell him that they love him*. **He hears and discovers his identity as one who is loved.**

Jesus is inviting us to enter into this Gospel especially in our secular age. He is inviting us to be healed of our deafness in an age and in a time in the Church where many wonder: **‘Where is God?’** Maybe some of us wonder where God is just as I had wondered at certain point in my life. Especially in our moments of trial, *he seems to be silent and our faith in him may wane.*

Many years ago, when things were a little rough in my life, I went to confession. My confessor was awesome, but even then it was one of those confessions where I felt ashamed, I felt unworthy, I felt like I had let God down; **I felt deaf to his love.**

Anyways, I went home that day and I was watching a documentary about St. John Paul II on Netflix and how he took down communism and ***I felt something stirring in my heart.*** I saw all the amazing things God was doing in the life of St. John Paul II, but *I sensed him inspiring me: “Troy, I want to do great things with you.”*

I was like, **“What?! Uhh...didn’t you JUST HEAR my confession? Didn’t you see HOW UNWORTHY I am?”**

But I heard him say to my heart, **“Troy, it is not what YOU do that makes you worthy; it is MY LOVE that makes you worthy.”**

In the moments of despair or weakness or suffering, we can hear the voice of the accuser, the enemy, who puts us down, tells us that *we are not worthy of his love and that we should just give up.* THAT is NOT THE VOICE OF THE FATHER, THAT is not THE VOICE OF THE ONE WHO SEES US AS WE TRULY ARE, ***as his beloved children,*** and *although he sees that we are weak and not worthy to perform his work BY OUR OWN POWER,* he sends the gift of his Spirit of Love to INFLAME our hearts so that we can COOPERATE with his love, so that we ***can be made worthy.***

God wants to speak his PERSONAL word into our life to change us, to REVEAL his voice to us in our deafness.

So St. Alphonsus Liguori says: *“Acquire the habit of speaking to God as if **you were alone with God.** Speak with **familiarity and confidence** as to your dearest and most loving friend. Speak of your LIFE, your PLANS, your TROUBLES, your JOYS, your FEARS. In return, God WILL speak to you—not that you will hear AUDIBLE WORDS in your ears, but WORDS that you will CLEARLY UNDERSTAND in your heart.”*

Yet sometimes our deafness is not **imposed upon us** from birth like the man in the Gospel today; it is more **self-induced and willingly accepted.** The constant NOISE we experience in our lives can become such a **distraction** that *we are not able to listen to his voice at all*—we can be spiritually deaf to his love. At every moment of our life we can fill the silence with music, podcasts, or any other sound, and what slowly begins to happen is that ***we drown out the voice of the Father*** who speaks words of love and of challenge and inevitably, *we forget or lose sight of him who is calling us to be his beloved children.*

We can be tempted to say in our hearts, **‘God doesn’t exist; I’ve never heard him or met him.’**

That is not to say that podcasts or music or talking is bad, but we need to ask ourselves, do we have intentional silence in our lives at all? When we drive or before we sleep or when we are exercising, what are we doing?

Without SILENCE in our LIVES, we do not have SILENCE in our HEARTS and without SILENCE in our HEARTS ***we do not create the space for God to speak truth into our lives***; we become DEAF to his voice and BLIND to our true identity. *“God drapes himself in silence”* and it is in there that we CAN and MUST find him.

*Even with the silence in our lives it may still be difficult to encounter God, to meet him, to know his name, to experience his love.* In the midst of so much war, confusion and potential exile, the Israelites experienced something similar in terms of the *absence of God, the silence of God*. But Isaiah reassured them: **“Behold your God will come...the ears of the deaf [shall be] unstopped...and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”**

When Jesus healed the man from his deafness and made him speak, he was deliberately fulfilling this prophecy of Isaiah and he was essentially proclaiming IN SILENCE: **‘the one True God you have been looking for is here in your midst!’**

And as Catholics we believe that Jesus’ presence, the presence of the Son of God, DID NOT END with his death and resurrection, but that it continues HERE TODAY not with the ***saliva in his spit*** but with the ***silence of the sacraments*** through which “Christ continues to ‘touch’ us in order to heal us” (CCC 1504).

After I finished reading the Gospel did you say praise to you Lord Deacon Troy? Praise to YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST! He speaks to us in the Gospels.

In a few moments Deacon Stephen and I will assist with the baptism and when Deacon Stephen says, ***I baptize you***...it is not Deacon Stephen speaking and baptizing but Jesus because it is Jesus who baptizes and who incorporates us and the little baby into the life of the Trinity.

Most importantly, during the liturgy of the Eucharist when Fr Jonathan says THIS IS MY BODY, THIS IS MY BLOOD, ***it is no longer Fr Jonathan speaking but Jesus Christ speaking through him!*** And when we receive the Bread which is truly his Body and the Wine which is truly his Blood, when we receive the Son of God into the SILENCE OF OUR HEARTS after communion, will we ALLOW him to open the EARS OF OUR HEART to his voice? Will we allow him to REVEAL to us OUR DEEPEST AND TRUEST IDENTITY? *Because then a supernatural world hitherto unknown to us* will come BURSTING into our heart and then we will hear **the voice of the God we have been seeking ALL ALONG** and say in our hearts: **“it sounds like I had always imagined it!”**