

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

An exhortatory reading. Do you know someone who needs to hear a message of hope? Imagine speaking this directly to that person.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Keep your voice and energy up throughout! Set this short but significant sentence apart.

vindication = vin-dih-KAY-shuhn (clearing from blame)

recompense = REK-uhm-pens (compensation for wrongs suffered)

Pause at the end of this line.

Make the words "leap," "sing," and "burst" sound like what they mean!

steppe = step

Drop your intensity slightly and slow to the end.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Proclamation cannot be effective unless it is expressive. As you prepare your proclamation, make choices about emotions. Some choices are already evident in the text.

LECTIONARY #128

READING I Isaiah 35:4-7a

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD:

Say to those whose hearts are frightened:

Be strong, fear not!

Here is your God,

he comes with vindication,

with divine recompense

he comes to save you.

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,

the ears of the deaf be cleared,

then will the lame leap like a stag,

then the tongue of the mute will sing.

Streams will burst forth in the desert,

and rivers in the steppe.

The burning sands will become pools,

and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

READING I

After depicting the destruction of God's enemies in the previous chapter, now the prophet delivers a message of consolation. Suffering and setback will be followed by salvation as Isaiah presents a vision of Jerusalem restored. God, who protected the exodus generation he had freed from slavery, will replicate the great deeds of that time and open the road to Zion. The people's rejoicing will be reflected in healing the deaf and lame. Later, in messianic times, Jesus' miracles will attest to the

redemption announced by the prophets like Isaiah. It is what we all long for, a transformation, a cure of our afflicted society. A desert, where torrents of water transform the landscape that makes life possible. The prophet announces the transformation of our reality that seems tired and resistant to change: light to blind eyes, renewed energies to the worn out, athletic forces to lame legs, sound to deaf ears, and songs from the mute.

READING II

James insists on the practice of the faith; faith simply has no meaning if it is not put into practice. Perhaps incidents had arisen in the Christian communities that prompted this topic: discrimination of persons on the basis of social rank. Such distinctions are not compatible with the life of faith. Jewish Law and the Gospel both condemn discrimination, exemplified by how the person is addressed and in the preferential seating for the rich. James recalls the Church's predilection for the poor. The Christian com-

TO KEEP IN MIND

A didactic reading is usually given out of love for the community. Make sure that love is evident in your proclamation.

A didactic reading. Don't make the mistake of assuming this teaching doesn't apply to your community. We all have our biases, and need this reminder to be aware and on our guard.

Gently but firmly.

With great deference.

Make these statements sound like commands.

With love.

A gentle reminder. Smile as you proclaim this good news.

munity has no room for favoritism based on status or wealth.

GOSPEL

In the Gospel Jesus generally moves in a region where people believe in one God. He and his disciples travel through Galilee, curing the sick and expelling demons. At first, this region presents no major obstacle to Jesus and the Gospel. But on one occasion Jesus breaks the routine, leaves his homeland, and travels to the distant north. Even the names of the district make us think of a

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 146:6–7, 8–9, 9–10 (1b)

R. Praise the Lord, my soul! or R. Alleluia.

The God of Jacob keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were
bowed down.

The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

The fatherless and the widow the LORD
sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations.
Alleluia.

READING II James 2:1–5

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

My brothers and sisters, show no **partiality** as you adhere to the faith in our **glorious** LORD Jesus Christ. For if a man with gold **rings** and fine **clothes** comes into your assembly, and a **poor** person in **shabby** clothes **also** comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the **fine** clothes and say, "Sit here, **please**," while you say to the **poor** one, "Stand **there**," or "Sit at my **feet**," have you not made **distinctions** among yourselves and become **judges** with evil **designs**?

Listen, my **beloved** brothers and sisters. Did not God choose those who are **poor** in the world to be **rich** in **faith** and **heirs** of the kingdom that he promised to those who **love** him?

pagan territory that is deaf to the Gospel. Jesus enters the northern region of Tyre, passes through Sidon, and crosses through the Decapolis—regions that abound in idolatry. That hostile region is where Jesus meets the deaf and the dumb.

Salvation in Jesus makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak—an allusion to Isaiah's image in the First Reading—and Mark shows how Isaiah's words are fulfilled in Christ. The crowd's acclamation ("He has done all things well") shows that the crowd recognizes the fulfillment of what was

expected of the Messiah. He has given speech to the dumb and hearing to the deaf. The Church's Ephphatha Rite, often celebrated before the baptismal liturgy, adopts some of these signs, signifying that Christ opens the ears of the newly baptized to hear and receive the Word of God.

This is the third time Mark records that Jesus tells people not to tell anyone about a healing. The first was a leper (1:44), then the resuscitation of a little girl (5:43), and now a deaf-mute; these will be joined by the blind man (8:26). The silence Jesus