

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Does anyone want to hear the Lord more clearly in their life?
 - I think most of us would say yes.
- Last week...
 - our readings focused on people...
 - who did clearly hear the Lord...
 - and they instantly changed their lives as a result.
 - In the first reading...
 - it was through the Jonah...
 - that the entire city of Nineveh converted.
 - And in the Gospel...
 - it was Jesus Himself...
 - speaking directly to the disciples.
 - They left everything to follow Him.
- And this week...
 - we again focus on hearing God speak...
 - but this time...
 - no one wants to hear Him!
 - In our first reading...
 - the people were pleading with the Lord...
 - NOT to hear His voice...
 - They feared it was going to kill them.
 - And in the Gospel...
 - the demon didn't want to hear the voice of the Lord.
 - But in the end...it was forced to listen and obey.
 - And the image that I had in prayer for this demon...
 - it was a childish one.
 - It's like a child who covers their ears...
 - and shouts at the top of it's lungs... *'I can't hear you'*
 - I don't remember that working as a child!
 - Nor does it work for this demon.
 - I think we can understand...
 - why demon didn't want to hear.
 - But what about the Israelites?
- Well...when God originally gave the 10 Commandments...
 - they were being spoken out loud...
 - by the voice of God Himself...to all the people of Israel.
 - So Moses...was NOT the only one...who could hear.
 - They could all clearly hear...
 - as if the Lord were speaking directly...personally...to each of them...
 - and that's because He was!
 - But just hearing the voice of Lord...it was too much for them...

- So they backed off and begged Moses:
 - “*you speak for the Lord instead!*”
 - The reason they were so afraid...
 - it wasn't just the peals of thunder...
 - or the smoke rising from the Mountain...
 - that great display of God's power.
 - I'm sure that had to be a part of it...
 - but the real reason...it lay hidden...deep within their hearts.
 - They even said out loud...
 - that they would follow...all that the Lord commanded.
 - But did they really mean it?
 - Well...when Moses went back up that mountain...
 - to speak to the Lord on their behalf...
 - what did they do?
 - That's when the hidden desires of their hearts...became manifest.
 - That's when they made an idol for themselves...the Golden Calf...
 - And they began to worship it.
 - So the real reason...
 - they didn't want to hear the Lord...
 - was actually same reason as that demon...
 - they did not want to hear...
 - because they did not want to obey.
- So what about us?
 - Do we really want to hear the Lord speak to us?
 - If we're honest...we're probably afraid...of what He might ask us to do.
 - St. John Paul II once said:
 - “*Jesus is demanding...because He wishes our genuine happiness.*”
(WYD Message for 2005)
 - We know deep down...that everything God asks of us...
 - including that which He asks of us...
 - through Holy Mother Church...
 - it's all for our good.
 - And yet...we still resist...
 - not in all the areas of our lives...
 - but we do hold back in some.
- So where are you stiff necked and stubborn like the Israelites of old?
 - Like them...
 - do you turn away from the Lord...and chase after other ‘gods’?
 - Do you place other things in your life...ahead of Him in importance?
 - Or perhaps it's...
 - one of the other 10 Commandments...
 - that binds up your heart.

- Whatever is...sometimes we do want to be free of it...like that man in our Gospel.
 - And that's when Jesus can work...directly at the source of the problem.
 - Because we do want to hear and obey.
 - So we surrender...more deeply...to workings of His Love.
- But other times...
 - we're like the Rich Young Man elsewhere in the Gospels...
 - who went away sad...
 - because he could not part with His wealth.
 - We're just not ready to let the words of Christ...
 - sink deep into our hearts.
 - In fact...His words...are too much for us...
 - so we tend to distance ourselves from Him.
- But Jesus...He never gives up on us!
 - And that's why He gives us...other people in our life.
 - The Israelites had Moses...
 - We have Our Blessed Mother...the angels...the saints.
 - They plead for us...before the Throne of God.
 - So maybe there's a particular saint...
 - who struggled with the exact same thing as you....
 - call on them!
 - ask for their help!
 - Or reach out to your spouse or a good friend...
 - and let them know your weakness...
 - let them know where you struggle.
 - Chances are...they already know...
 - but talking about it is good!
 - It takes a lot of courage to be vulnerable like that.
 - But I guarantee...
 - that it will help to open your heart...
 - and help you to surrender...
 - more deeply...to workings of God's Love in your life.
- My brothers and sisters...
 - in this life...
 - Jesus will never force us to listen to Him.
 - We can be childish...
 - we can do our best to drown out His voice...
 - to ignore Him...
 - But there will come a time...at the final judgement...
 - when...like that demon...we must hear and obey.
 - So if we want to be happy...
 - in this life...as well as in the next...
 - well...our Responsorial Psalm put it best:
 - *"If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts."*