

## Use Your Voice

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

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Fr. Tony Davis

Everyone deserves to be heard. One of the major problems of human history has been the silencing of many human voices. In their attempts to slant everything in their favor, the powerful have had too loud a voice, giving us their narrative and drowning out all others. It is those who have too soft of a voice or a silenced voice that need to hear our scripture readings this weekend.

In our first reading from *Isaiah*, the prophet wants to boost the confidence of those who feel weak, small, insignificant, timid, shy, and afraid. In the name of God, he says to them, 'Be strong, fear not! Your God is with you. God comes with vindication, with divine recompense. God comes to save you.' Then, in beautiful language, he says, "the tongue of the mute will sing."

In our second reading from *James*, he reminds us that the rich should not receive better treatment than the poor, for "did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?" The silenced poor have something to say on behalf of God.

Finally, in the Gospel from *Mark*, Jesus heals a man who had trouble speaking due to an impediment. In his empathy for this man, he commands "be open!" and the impediment dropped and the man spoke plainly.

God has given each of us a voice that we should strive to use. Finding our voice can be a struggle because of many things: our own inability to express ourselves, a physical disability, our lack of confidence, or being silenced by others. Yet, God empowers us to make an effort to speak.

A man who struggled to find his voice most of his life was Archbishop Oscar Romero, the archbishop in San Salvador from 1977-1980. After entering the seminary at age 13 in the 1930s, he lived most of his life as a dedicated company man in the Church. Because of his loyalty, he moved up the clerical ranks until finally becoming the archbishop. It was only after becoming archbishop that he found his God-given

voice and used it forcefully against the governmental and military forces who had complete control over the poor, especially the farmers. Archbishop Romero spoke up for them. He once said, "to be a Christian now means to have the courage to preach the true teaching of Christ and not be afraid of it, not be silent out of fear and preach something easy that won't cause problems." (Dec. 5, 1977) His voice did indeed cause him problems, so much so that while celebrating mass on March 24, 1980, he was shot and killed at the altar

*God wants all of us to try to use our voices.*

Question: Have I given up on my voice? The temptation to resignation is always there. Let us pray that we may find renewed strength in our readings this weekend as Jesus now says to each of us, '*Ephphatha!*' 'Be opened!'