



September 5, 2021

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Epphatha!"—that is, "Be opened!" Mark 7:34

Dear Friends;

Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827) the famous German composer started losing his hearing in his mid-twenties and he was totally deaf by the time he was 45 years old. He died at age 56. How he dealt with his deafness (in an age when people did not understand its causes) is one of the great stories of humanity not just of music.

Most do not realize how debilitating hearing loss can be. It was a struggle that hindered Beethoven's ability to communicate, work as a musician, or find a place to live. He constantly changed his lodgings probably due to his landlords' frustration with him pounding the piano at all hours.

In his younger days Beethoven performed publically as a musician which was how composers got people to be familiar with their music. They didn't just write music they had to perform it. For the longest time he did not want people to know about his deafness because he justifiably believed it would ruin his career.

When his hearing was fully gone, Beethoven lost his public life with it. Once he gave up public appearances and performances he allowed only certain friends to visit him. They had to communicate by writing in notebooks. Fully deaf made Beethoven a very private and insulated person.

Beethoven was able to compose even with his profound hearing loss. This was not too difficult since music as a language has rules. Knowing those rules allowed him to continue to compose without being able to hear the music. Beethoven's musical style changed after his retreat from public life. His sixth symphony—the Pastoral—celebrates the peace of the countryside to which he had retreated.

This important sixth symphony reflects the healing he experienced by communing with nature. In 1810 in a letter to a friend Beethoven writes *"How delighted I shall be to ramble for a while through bushes, woods, under trees, through grass, and around rocks."* He wasn't going to let his disability imprison him in self-isolation. He was reaching out in other ways.

In today's gospel Jesus heals a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. Jesus the healer was not going to leave the man in his current state. We as humans are social beings. Isolation is an extreme psychological burden. We are meant to listen, speak and to share life with each other. Jesus' healing of the deaf man tells us of God's desire to heal and restore us to the full life of community and the perfect communion of the Trinity.

Everyone needs to hear the Good News and every voice needs to be heard because we are all without exception the children of God. We all have had a taste of the debilitating effects of isolation over the last year and a half due to the Covid-19 Quarantine. We should therefore be motivated to make sure everyone can actively participate and share in the life of the community. In a democratic government that means we should also be making it easier for people to vote and be heard; not isolating others. Those who want to restrict the rights of others need to have Jesus perform the rite of exorcism so they can hear Jesus say, *"Epphatha—be opened!"*

Peace,

Fr Ron