



O Lord, open my lips...!

Homily, 12 October 2019 – Rafał Ziajka SDS

Saturday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time (I)
[Jl 4, 12-21; Ps 97, 1-2. 5-6. 11-12; Lk 11, 27-28]

Jesus is speaking. His disciples are listening. We are among them. We are listening too, aren't we? So, what do we hear? What did Jesus say? Nothing? If we read only today's Gospel we might remain perplexed or confused. This passage tells us about Jesus' speech, but does not explain his words. Instead, we hear what is said by someone from the crowd. There is a woman. She is listening to Jesus too. She is listening very carefully. And whatever she hears, it opens her mouth.

She raises her voice and says: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!". And then we hear from Jesus, who seems to ignore what she is saying. It appears that Jesus is correcting her. Some may even say, that Jesus wants to return to what He was saying before. But it is a false impression. Let us read it again to see the real meaning of this passage. The voice of the lady seems to be an interruption. The Evangelist underlines that what is happening in this scene is related to what Jesus was saying before. Our attention might be distracted by the question: What exactly was Jesus saying?

This passage is a part of the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. At the beginning, we see Jesus praying by himself. Then his disciples ask him to teach them to pray. Even more so, Jesus tells his disciples to be persistent in prayer; to be unceasing in it. Essentially, Jesus is teaching his disciples how to open their mouths and therefore to open their hearts and lives before God. Not only to pray but to truly speak with God. And in the following verses of this chapter, right before today's Gospel, we see Jesus curing someone who was mute. That person was possessed by an unclean spirit. The sick one was not able to reveal to others his thoughts, his feelings, nor his heart. We might say that he was unable to share his life with others. But most of all, he was unable to pray.

Let us remember the scene from the First Book of the prophet Samuel. Before Samuel was born, Hannah his mother, was praying that God would open her womb, so she can have a child. And as she was making a vow to God, the priest named Eli watched her. Hannah was moving her lips, but there was no sound. Because the priest did not hear what Hannah was saying, he assumed she was drunk. For him, to pray to God, was to say the prayer out loud. Otherwise it was not a prayer. Prayer had to be spoken aloud. No sound, no prayer. When Jesus opens the lips of the enslaved person, the mute person, He takes him from the possession of the unclean spirit and gives him freedom to worship God, to have a new relationship with God. Jesus brings true freedom.

We read in the Gospel that most spectators were amazed at his works, but some accused Jesus saying that His power does not come from God. Jesus answers: "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Later He explains what happens to the one who does not use his freedom to receive God's life – does not let God's spirit dwell in his life).

And here we are with what we heard today. It looks like, Jesus, in that moment did not only cure the mute person. It is Jesus who by His word opens also the mouth of the lady. In this moment she is not just crying out, but she is empowered to profess her faith. She says it openly to all. She finds courage to say it in such way that Jesus will hear it. It is possible that many times she wanted to be sure that God was listening to her. It is a desire that is common to all of us. In this moment she realizes that it is possible. It is enough to simply talk to Jesus. It can be a great lesson for all of us participating in this retreat. To listen to the word of God is to let God cure whatever is still mute in our life, to open whatever is closed, and to speak freely about whatever we did not have the courage to say to God (yet).

The woman in the Gospel says a very beautiful blessing. She experiences the revelation that whatever "is at the origin" of Jesus' life is good and comes from God. Every blessing has its source in God's love. In my ears, the words of this woman sound like she is speaking because by listening to Jesus she received her answer. She

raises her voice because she immediately has to proclaim the truth she has just understood. Whatever were her expectations, whatever was her question - Jesus is the answer.

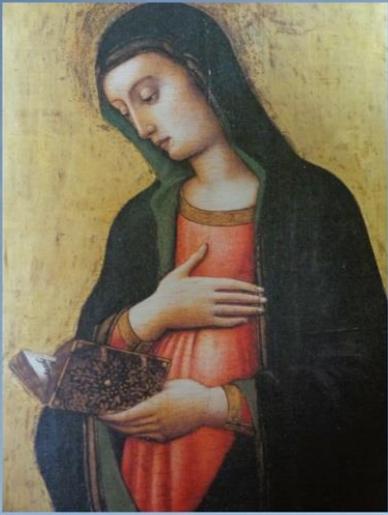
Jesus responds to her: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”. She is blessed because she was listening and heard the word of God. She permitted the word of God to touch her heart and mind. Jesus’ words became the womb and she could see the Kingdom of God, because she was born of that womb, she was born from the above. Whoever listens to the word of God is born of the Spirit (as we see in the meeting of Nikodemus with Jesus). The real womb is the word of God. And whoever obeys the word of God finds out that His word is the nourishment for eternal life. To obey the word of God is not to be submissive to the law, but ready to be nursed by God.

The woman in today’s Gospel teaches me one very important insight: It is not that we need courage to listen and then to follow Jesus. In the apostolic life, we become courageous by doing so. Amen.

While Jesus was speaking,
a woman from the crowd
called out and said to him:
**„Blessed is the womb that carried you
and the breasts at which you nursed”**.

He replied:
**„Rather, blessed are those
who hear the word of God
and observe it”**.

Lk 11, 27-28





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