

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (9/5-6/2009)

Isaiah 35/4-7, Psalm 123, James 2/3-5, Mark 7/31-37

They're called "aha" moments, and we all have them occasionally.

Some truth, some insight suddenly becomes so clear to us that we wonder how we missed it before.

Or an event we have only marginally been interested in comes into the forefront of our consciousness at just the right moment.

Years ago, I was taking a course in "Non-directive Counseling" at Loyola University.

For three semesters, I struggled with the theory and the practice of this special kind of listening.

Then one Monday afternoon, I responded to a question of the professor, and he looked at me and said,

"You got it; you finally got it."

I was proud as a peacock at that "aha" moment.

Jesus provided some awesome "aha" moments for people along the way.

In today's Gospel reading, he takes a deaf mute who had a speech impediment apart from the crowd; then he put his hand into the man's ear and touched his tongue with spittle.

The man is cured in an instant.

There's a physical aspect to the cure of course, but, on a spiritual level, it also is an "aha" moment.

The spiritual aspect of the event can speak volumes to us today 20 centuries later.

We go along from week to week, taking part in the Eucharist, passively listening to the Scripture readings, our minds often somewhere off in cyberspace.

And then, it is as if the Holy Spirit says, "Enough already!" And the Spirit proceeds to open our minds to the deepest significance of God's word, God's presence.

An "aha" moment of the highest order.

Has it ever happened to you?

Isaiah today spells out that realization quite specifically.

"Here is your God...He comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared..."

Our relationship to God is so important that it calls for our full attention.

And yet, for many of us, it is only a passing thought that we occasionally pay attention to.

That's probably why the Holy Spirit jolts us, to get our attention.

I have a friend who divides his spiritual life and growth into four time sectors.

In each of those time frames, he sees how God had to knock him down mentally or physically to wake him up to the next moment of grace; he believes his spiritual growth would not have happened without those divine "kicks in the pants"!

Maybe, if we take a closer look at what happens to us in our lives, we will see the hand of God urging us along, providing "aha" moments, and expecting them to be acknowledged.

So, keep your eyes and ears open.

The Lord may be preparing some profound "aha" experience for you too.