

September 6, 2015

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared, the lame leap like a stag, and the tongue of the mute will sing. (Is. 35)

*This is the song of those who have had their demons expelled
and who have been healed*

A little background to this Gospel story would be helpful. Spitting is a common Middle Eastern precaution against evil. A person who suspects another of possessing or casting the “evil eye” will spit to deflect or deactivate that power. The Galatians “spit” when they saw Paul whom they suspected of having an “evil eye.” Traditional healers routinely used this strategy to ward off evil.

Jesus spat to cast out darkness (demons) and to heal. Pope Francis is coming from Sept. 22nd to 27th to “spit” on the US to cast out our darkness and to heal to us.

Pope Francis’ coming visit to the US

There is an article by Jesuit Fr. Tom Reese in the National Catholic Reporter of September the 3rd titled, “*Five things to look for during the papal visit.*” They are:

Pope Francis is coming to heal us: “*By focusing on loving our sisters and brothers, especially the poor, the sick, and the marginalized. Francis preaches not only with words, but with actions. I am willing to go out on a limb and predict that his poll ratings will be up after the visit because even those who disagree with him like and respect him.*”

Pope Francis is coming to heal us: “*By speaking to power to comfort the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. As archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he once told a church full of politicians and government officials on a civic holiday that they should put aside corruption and take care of the poor. They were so angry that they did not come back the following year but found a more hospitable church for their celebration. He will say to a [joint session of Congress](#) Sept. 24th to care or the poor, welcome the immigrant, work for peace, protect the environment, and cherish life. He will likely keep his hard-hitting attacks on libertarian capitalism, globalization, and a consumer-based economy which will upset many comfortable people who like the status quo.*”

Pope Francis is coming to heal us: “*By calling for peace and reconciliation among peoples. Francis has already shown himself to be a consummate diplomat by midwifing an agreement between Cuba and the United States that has restored diplomatic relations. It will be interesting to hear what he has to say about Cuban-U.S. relations while he is in Cuba before flying to the United States. Could the Castro regime be smart enough to put some high-profile political*

prisoners on the pope's plane? This would reduce congressional opposition to repealing economic sanctions and shield Cuba from appearing to cave in to American pressure.

Before the United Nations on Sept. 25th, Francis will undoubtedly add a plea for the environment, in line with his encyclical [Laudato Si'](#). He knows that tough negotiations are ahead at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris at the end of the year. He will remind the world that it is facing a global crisis of apocalyptic dimensions, and all nations must make sacrifices for the common good. For the pope, this is a moral issue because it will affect the lives of people, especially the poor. He will also speak about refugees and religious freedom."

Pope Francis is coming to heal us: *"By inspiring the Catholic faithful and their bishops. He comes to preach and break bread with them. Many people complain that the Francis revolution is not succeeding in the United States because many of the bishops and clergy are not onboard. They just don't get it. What will he say to them? For a [preview](#), one might look at what Francis said to the bishops in Brazil when he visited there. In his [July 27, 2014, address to the Brazilian bishops](#) and his [address the next day to the Latin American Episcopal Conference](#), Francis set forth his ecclesiology, his pastoral priorities for the church. He talked of training ministers who could warm people's hearts, of being a church of mercy and forgiveness, of empowering women in the church, of developing a proactive mindset, and of empowering the laity to share in the church's mission. Do we give the laity, he asked, 'the freedom to continue discerning, in a way befitting their growth as disciples, the mission which the Lord has entrusted to them? Do we support them and accompany them, overcoming the temptation to manipulate them or infantilize them?'"*

Pope Francis is coming to heal us: *"By staying on message. The inevitable goofs and stumbles of any major visit will take attention away from his message, but Francis has shown a remarkable ability to stay on message despite the circus that surrounds him. He will focus on God's compassion and love, and on our responsibility to love one another. His priorities are helping the poor, protecting the environment, and bringing peace to a troubled world. Many people are going to try to manipulate the pope's visit for their own agendas. Democrats and Republicans, environmentalists and pro-life activists, bishops and victims of abuse are all going to say that their issues are the most important. Spin doctors will pontificate; critics will say he doesn't know what he is talking about. Some people will find these teaching hard and "no longer walk with him" (John 6:66). This should not surprise us. The teachings of Jesus met opposition and created controversy. Being true to the Gospel will also make Francis controversial, but that will not stop him from fulfilling his prophetic and pastoral mission."*

Pope Francis is coming to "spit" on - to heal - the U.S.

† To care for our sisters and brothers, especially the poor, the sick, and the marginalized;

† To call for leaders to put aside corruption and care for the poor;

- † To work for peace and reconciliation among peoples;
- † To inspire and break bread with the Catholic faithful and the bishops;
- † To stay on message by focusing on God's compassion and love for us, and our's for one another.

**Pope Francis' message can open our eyes to see, clear our ears to hear,
help us leap from our lameness, and loosen our tongues to sing.**

*It is only by listening to his message and letting it sink in
will Francis' spitting on our country expel our demons and heal us*