

I have a friend in St. Louis who reads lips pretty well, but doesn't hear much speech. He came to visit me at the same time other friends were hoping to come for a charismatic convention. He's got a good sense of humor; he can joke about his condition. His arrival here is a funny story because he tells it on himself. He had car trouble on the way in, pulled into a gas station to find out what was wrong, and the attendant blurted out, "What's wrong? You need a new muffler! What are you deaf are something?" When we put him in his room the air conditioner wasn't working and we had a fan on. He laughed at us because without even thinking we told him if the noise got to be too much to shut it off before going to sleep. Then he wanted to know if my friends had arrived for the charismatic convention. I said no, they changed their plans. And he said, "Good. I don't want to get healed."

My sister-in-law Becky works with the hearing impaired in the diocese and she says many of them feel that way. They don't want to get healed. They've grown accustomed to living one way, and they don't want to learn another one.

At first that surprised me, but I know that many of us are like that too. We all have situations we've learned how to live with. We can grow so comfortable with them that we really don't want to change. This week I spoke with a woman about annulments. She and her husband have been married seven years outside the Church, and one reason they hadn't sought an annulment was because she heard it takes so long. My response was, "It doesn't take seven years." Our confession lines are shorter now and there are many reasons for it. But I think one is people figure out what confession is for. It's for those who want to change, and that's asking a lot. When we've grown accustomed to living one way, we don't want to learn another.

I sometimes wonder about this poor man in today's Gospel. Did he really want to be cured? It was his friends who brought him to Jesus; it wasn't his idea. Then Jesus suddenly pulls him apart from the crowd, sticks his fingers in the man's ears, spits in his face, takes a deep breath, and says the word, "Ephphatha." It's one of the weirdest methods Jesus ever used in curing somebody. And it changed the man's world. I'm sure it wasn't easy adjusting to a new life. But this is so like Jesus. He'll answer your prayer, and then he'll make you wonder why you ever asked for it.

I hear people say, "I wish I had a deeper spiritual life. I wish I had more time with my kids. I wish I could relate better to my neighbors." Do you really? Do you really want to change? Are you waiting for someone else to bring you to Jesus? Or are you willing to step up for the cure. Sometimes I wonder if we really want it, because the cure may challenge us more than the disease.