

**“THE ART OF LISTENING”  
FOURTH SUNDAY**

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When I read the readings for today’s Mass, I zeroed in on the importance of listening. First of all, to God. Second, to God’s messengers, the prophets (then and now) and Third to one another.

In the First Reading, Moses, speaking as a prophet, encourages the Israelite people to listen to him and to all who speak in God’s Name.

Prophets have to be good listeners to God’s Voice and they have to have the courage to speak what is in their heart. Not all who claim to be prophets, though, are good ones. God reminds us of this in the First Reading: *“If a person presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him/her to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he/she will die.”*

Discernment is needed to weed out the bad prophets so as not to follow their teachings.

The Psalmist aims his message at the listener: *“If today you hear God’s Voice, harden not your heart.”* What are some of the reasons we can do this: out of fear of the message and what it might ask of us; pride, self-centeredness, or stubbornness in one’s own opinions. Scripture Scholar, Roland Faley, writes:

*A hardened heart represents an inflexible person who thinks he or she knows best and is unwilling to receive direction.*

We can pray for freedom to be open to hearing what God wishes to say to us.

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In the Gospel, Jesus who definitely heard what the Father was saying in his heart, unhesitatingly, and successfully, rebukes an unclean spirit which had been tormenting one of the townfolk of Capernaum: *“Quiet! Come out of him!”* he commanded and the evil spirit was expelled.

Here, I am reminded of something that happened to me while I was living at a Blackfoot Mission in Southern Alberta, Canada. The principal of our elementary school phoned me one day and asked if I could come over to the gym right away. Seemed that two of the nightwatchmen on two different nights had scary experiences near one end of the basketball court. It was an area, she explained where a boy who had graduated from the school used to come over to shoot some hoops. A couple of months previous he had committed suicide. She believed that his spirit was unsettled and needed to be freed. So, I grabbed my stole, some holy water, and salt. Water to bless the area; salt to send the spirit on its way. With her help, we did just that. A couple of days later she called to tell me that the nightwatchmen told her that all was now peaceful on the court.

**CONCLUSION**

Let us pray that we may have a listening heart,

open to what God wishes to “whisper” to us.  
Let us pray that we may have a reflective  
mind so we may be in tune with the Word of God.  
Above all, we ask God to help us to put aside some  
quiet time each day so we can hear that  
“small, still, Voice within.”

**AMEN.**