

Reflections on the 23rd Sunday Ordinary Time 24B.

Mass: Isaiah 35:4-7; Psalm: 145; James 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37.

When I was fifteen and attending a further education college I studied for an history 'O' Level exam. The teacher was bit scary but a good teacher. He taught us about the 19th century and mentioned the First Vatican Council in which the Pope, Pius 1X, was declared infallible. With a smirk he told us that for Catholics this meant that if the Pope told us to stir our tea anticlockwise then we had to do it. My hand shot in the air, and I told him that the comment was simply not true. The Pope was only infallible when he taught in areas of faith or morality. I remember it to this day because where the courage came to speak out in public came from, I just don't know. On reflection I realised two things had happened. Firstly, we had been taught in my last year at school about Apologetics, how to understand and answer question about our faith. secondly my new class had very quickly grown together from all over the city, through that I had grown in confidence and also we had often discussed religious ideas among ourselves. The freedom to speak and the knowledge of what to say, however limited in my case, are the two important things Jesus teaches us today. This is gentile territory and Jesus has the support of his disciples to liberate this man and set him free to speak what he has experienced. We all need both of these things in our culture today.