

November 5, 2017 The Power of Human Words Homily: Brothers and sisters, to understand and appreciate the enormous power of human words, I suggest you see the award winning film, "*The King's Speech*", which is based on a true story. Prince Albert unexpectedly ascends to the English throne after his older brother abdicates in order to marry his twice divorced lover. Many of the English aristocracy were alarmed at the prospect of a man suffering from a known speech impediment leading Great Britain in an age of communication and advanced technology. However, through the heroic efforts of a speech and language therapist, the king, (George VI) is prepared to make one of the most important speeches in the long-distinguished history of his country.

In the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Winston Churchill and the then Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, the king addressed a radio audience for the first time. It seemed as if the whole nation was dialed in to his momentous speech. He declared England at war with the axis powers, notably Germany. His speech was flawless. People all over England were inspired by his words, and now prepared to assume the challenges of engaging in yet another world war.

Have you ever paused to reflect on the truly extraordinary Christian belief that God speaks to us. In the sacred liturgy, the lector concludes the reading by saying, "The Word of God!" The Divine Word is truly expressed in human words. God speaks through the mouth of apostles and prophets.

Surely one of the greatest preachers of the Word was St. Paul. Paul's mission was to preach the gospel, the "Good News". In his first known letter, his letter to the early Christian community of Thessalonica, he offers words of thanks for their embracing the Gospel. He writes, "In receiving the Word of God from hearing us, you received it not as a human word, but as it truly is, the word of God which is now at work in you who believe" (1 Thess.2:13). Equally striking is that they witnessed to the truths revealed to them at a time when they were sorely persecuted by their fellow Jews who rejected the claims of Jesus.

Last weekend, a longtime parishioner of Sacred Heart Church shared with me a precious memory from her childhood years. At the time Bishop Fulton Sheen was perhaps the most lauded preacher in America. He was the host of his own radio program in the days prior to the advent of television, the 1940's. He attracted a large listening audience. My parishioner told me that she and her family would gather around the radio and listen to his Christian message. And they were spellbound! They would hang on his every word!

What must be our response to the God who speaks to us? In one word, faith! We must bear witness to the gospel in our daily life. The refusal to hear the Word of God is the very root of sin.

At some point in life, we all weary of the distractions that impede our relationship with the Lord. Noise drowns out the word of God clamoring for our attention. Do we let the many distractions of our modern technology weaken our faith and make us deaf to hear the words of salvation? Has the "Word" lost its enormous power in our highly visual and obsessively entertainment culture?

Amen!