

COMMENTARY ON READINGS FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2006
(Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)
(Isa 35:4-7a; Ps 146; Jas 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37)

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These Sunday's readings summon us to reflect on the poor of the world. Those who most long for God are those who do not have the comforts of the world, who feel powerful and satisfied (at least in material things), but rather, those who suffer and feel helpless, and who thus turn to God, the only one who is willing to help them.

The first reading is from a part of the prophet Isaiah that reflects that many people are frightened, discouraged; they wait for God to intervene and save them. The Bible is full of colorful, graphic images, and here we have those of the blind and the lame, who will be healed. These types of "miracles" came to be known in Judaism as the "works (or deeds) of the Messiah," and this very expression is found in Matt 11:2.

Jesus literally fulfilled such expectations. He was known as a healer, and we have accounts of lepers, bleeding women, blind persons, deaf and mute people which he healed, even those who had died. There are even today many countries in the world where the poor have no doctors to recur to, but must rely on other attempts at cures. In Jesus' day, too, it was mostly the poor who sought his help, for no one else would comfort them.

The reading from James is as relevant today as it was then. The rich are favored, distinguished, the poor given the lower places. This is the state of the world today. We have forsaken the poor and given our money to destructive causes, in many cases, and thus the world is in the state that it is, and nothing but healing love —and not arms— will cause things to change. Time is running out.