

Ten Takeaways on the Deaf Community from Bishop Chau

1. “The deaf community has their own behaviors as well as a culture. So, they don’t see deafness as a disability. That’s why in the ministry, there are separate ministries—deaf ministries, separate from the ‘people with disabilities’ ministry, because they don’t consider themselves disabled.”
2. “For years, the deaf have been neglected, maybe not purposely. Because not every parish can afford an interpreter, maybe they don’t see a need. Maybe there are people sitting out there that are deaf, but you don’t know they’re deaf because deafness doesn’t have a kind of ‘look.’ Unless you see a hearing aid or a cochlear implant now, you know that that person has some sort of a hearing impairment. But it was a blessing, then, to take over that ministry.”
3. “I had to learn how the deaf person hears. How do they hear? What are the ears for the deaf person? Their eyes—they hear with their eyes. So, when I’m preparing for my homily, I want everyone—and this is normal for me: when I prepare my homily, I want people to bring home something, at least one thing with them. I ask questions. I really want people to understand, and my goal is for them to really understand what the Gospel is, or the message that I want to bring forward, and I want them to be transformed. I want them to go home changed.”
4. “I make my homilies or my preaching really hospitable and welcoming. I engage them. I ask them questions.”
5. “This is a community that’s hungry, because they don’t have this everywhere. Right now, there are so many young deaf that are growing without faith, because their parents never went to church, so they’re not going to church. You think this is happening only with the hearing millennials and the young people? No, it’s happening within them too. And believe me, they are hungry for the truth as well.”
6. “They don’t care how long your homily is. You could go all day. And they’re like this, ‘More, more, more, more, more!’ So, there is a need in the Church for more men and women to learn sign language.”
7. “You have to practice sign language. You have to really be involved so that you can know the culture as well. Not just the language, but the culture; why they do what they do, and so forth. They’re hungry, and they’re always ready for the message of the Lord to always be presented to them.”

8. “We need to start thinking beyond, because the secular world is stealing the deaf young people from us. They really are. Their world is completely without God because nobody is there to preach to them. That’s why I love this reading from Romans [Rom 10:14-17]. But who’s going to go? How are they going to know that you love them though there’s no one to tell them that they love them? So, we want to create formation for our deaf people as well.”
9. “There’s a lot of injustice in the deaf community. So how can we alleviate that as Christians, as Catholics, as a community? As they’re part of our community, how can we involve them? How can we also include them, make them feel included and be part of the community learning together?”
10. “Are we facilitating the learning for this community? Go to your home parishes and start asking, ‘Are there deaf people in our community, and how can we serve them?’”