Speaking to the soul

Gift of Speech

[Jesus said,] "I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you." Matthew 12:36-37

Mother Teresa said: "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." How true! I am sure we can all think of kind words that have been said to us over the years. The words might have only taken a few

seconds to speak and were probably forgotten by the speaker soon after, but we can still remember the exact words and the effect that they had on us. We clearly need to be incredibly careful with the words that we use, and Jesus emphasises this by asserting that, one day, we will have to give an account for what we say.

Unfortunately, Mother Teresa's wise observation needs to be applied to our unkind words as well. They too will have long echoes. It has been wisely said: "Be careful with your words. Once they are said they can only be forgiven, not forgotten." Because most of us speak a large number of words, it is sadly inevitable that some will have a damaging effect. Sometimes it will be because we were misunderstood, or had failed to understand the situation fully but, in truth, it may occasionally be because we were angry, and we meant to hurt. Once spoken, the words cannot be rubbed out. We might wish that we could eat our words but sadly we can't. This places a huge responsibility upon us and it also underlines our need to be humble and gracious in everything that we say. This reminds us once again of the sheer impossibility of living the Christian life in our own strength. It is only as we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit that we will be able to speak in a way that consistently pleases God and brings encouragement to others.

QUESTION
How might these reflections affect the way in which you speak today?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you for the gift of speech. Help me to use my words today to encourage and strengthen other people. Amen