



INTRODUCTION

Share your observations on what is happening in our World today.

(Let the group say what they heard and read from Social Media)

The world is very much troubled. More people are dying of the Covid-19 pandemic. It seems that it is getting worst in spite of vaccines due to new variants coming. It is just next door or within our homes and communities. People are tired of lockdowns. Hospitals and quarantine facilities are full especially both in cities and provinces in the Philippines. This situation prevails especially in poor countries like us. While Covid 19 persists, the world is shaken by the conflict in some countries like Myanmar and Afghanistan. How do you feel amid all these happenings in the country and in the world?

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and many other problems, God’s Kingdom of healing with his saving love is present, as Jesus shows us in today’s Gospel.



OPENING PRAYER

Any appropriate song or prayer to the Holy Spirit.



PHASE ONE
REMEMBER THE STORY OF JESUS

1.1 Proclamation of the Gospel Story Mark 16:15-20
Enthroned the Bible on a table with lighted candle)

A moment of prayerful silence

We will not be able to understand the Word of God unless God himself opens our hearts. Let us now welcome Jesus as He speaks to us through His Word

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mk 7:31-37



Again Jesus left the district of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man’s ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, “Ephphatha!”— that is, “Be opened!” — And immediately the man’s ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed,

and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, “He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord

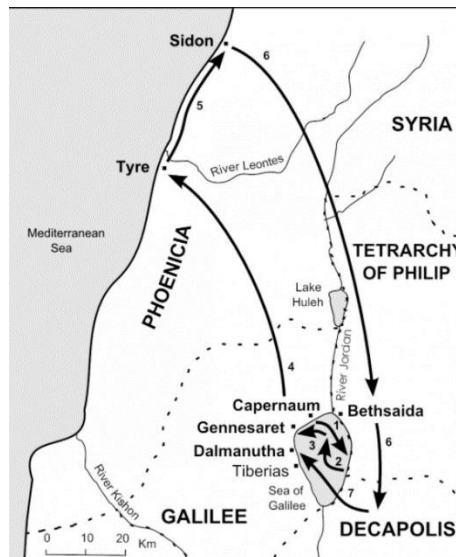
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

1,2 Brief Guided silent Meditation / Personal Prayer

How did Jesus heal the deaf and the mute man?

1.3 Text in Context

The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest and the first Gospel written. Matthew and Luke used a lot of stories about Jesus’ life and death from Mark whose style of writing is direct and simple. Many of the experts in the Bible, agreed that, he wrote the Gospel for the Gentile (pagans or non-believers of the True God) convert who were not used to the Jewish’ way of life. Mark used a lot details and descriptions in narrating stories about Jesus to make his writing clear to them. For example, in today’s Gospel, he gave us a picture of the places of Jesus’ ministry around Galilee and uses Aramaic words, (a very old language used in Jesus’ time) . like *Ephphatha*. Let us also imagine the series of Jesus actions to show how healing happened.



1. What places were given at the beginning of this Gospel story? (Tyre, Sidon, Sea of Galilee, Decapolis)
2. What does it say about Jesus’ work or ministry? (Jesus spent most of his time preaching and healing neighboring places of Galilee).
3. What did the people bring to Jesus. (People brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him.)
4. What did Jesus do for this man? (Jesus healed his deafness and removed his speech impediment.)
5. How did Jesus do this? (Jesus put his finger in the man’s ears, touched the man’s tongue with spittle, and prayed aloud)
6. What word did he say while doing this? (He said to him, “Ephphatha!”— that is, “Be opened!”)
7. What did the man and his friends do after he was healed? (They announced that Jesus had done all things well, making the deaf man hear and curing his speech impediment.)



A love that knows no boundary

Mark gives us descriptions of Jesus' travel beyond Galilee to other pagan territories. We see on the map the journey Jesus trod in today's Gospel Story:

-Jesus left Capernaum, located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee to Tyre and Sidon. These two cities were north and west of Israel, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
-From Sidon, Jesus turned south passing this time the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee into the region of Decapolis.

These places show us Jesus as a man of action- preaching, healing and performing miracles. His love for the Father is shown in the urgency of the mission to all, not only to the Jews but even to all including those outside the Jewish faith. Jesus did not do all these for mere activism and popularity but for God's Kingdom – where all are called to belong. Jesus is happy to see them healed and knowing more who the Father is. His teachings are centered around "Love" which he showed by his action.

In our language today, Pope Francis called this:
"Social love' makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone" (Fratelli Tutti, 183).

Faith when shared, grows and is strengthened

Decapolis is the area where Jesus cast out demons to the man living among the tombs (Mark 5:19-20). After the man was healed from the bad spirits, he asked Jesus to join his disciples. Jesus, instead advised him to go back to his hometown to proclaim the mercy and healing he had received from God. This unknown man must be a champion to proclaiming God's goodness. His own faith in Christ and sharing of the faith must have prepared this encounter.

Now, we see Jesus' close encounter with the deaf and dumb man who was brought by the people to Jesus. They must be one of those who have been touched by the story of man's healed by Jesus from unclean spirit. Faith when shared grows and becomes stronger. Faith is like a virus. It spreads fast and contaminates others but does well to one's whole being.
Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters. (Pope Francis)

Hope is born from faith

How did Jesus heal the deaf and mute man? Again, Mark gives us clear details:

First, *he took him off by himself away from the crowd.*

Second, *he put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue*

Third, *he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha! that is, "Be opened*

The man must have been suffering from hearing and speech defects since birth. He must have been hoping to be freed from this ailment that cuts him off from the normal life of the community. Who will ever think that this will come to an end? His hope was alive until that day he met Jesus.

Jesus' face to face contact with him must have revealed him all the secrets of his life including the sin of darkness he committed. Away from the crowd, Jesus took him in private. He knew the man needed special attention that he never had in the past. This brief gaze of Jesus on him must have a lasting impact on the man who could neither hear nor talk.

"Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in

their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society" (Fratelli Tutti, 187).

But Jesus' look is accompanied by his loving touch of on the man's ears and tongues and loving command of healing. ***Ephphatha!***— ***Be opened.*** Jesus did this not with his own power alone but with his communion with God. He looked toward heaven and groaned as if pleading for help. He is the Son of God. He can do all things on his own, but constantly clings to God in hope and faith. In an instant the man's tongue was loosed and ears cleared. And to everybody's surprise he began to speak just like anyone else.

We may hear and speak well and say proudly, *I don't need healing in this area of our physical being.*

But we may have been suffering from being deaf and mute without our knowing it.

In the same way, Jesus commands us with the same word "*Ephphatha*" or be opened to the new path of believing (faith), hoping (hope), and loving. Let us look seriously into our relationship with self, others, and God, even with the environment especially at this trying time of the Covid 19 pandemic

FAITH assures us of our belief in the True God. Do I courageously proclaim to myself and to others what Jesus said: *Do not be afraid. I am with you*, while Covid 19 virus is on the rise.

LOVE has no limits: Are my ears deaf from the cries of a poor neighbor or beggar in the street who are most badly affected by the pandemic? How do I show my care for them amidst the hard life now?

HOPE helps us look forward to brighter future: When I observe something wrong in the family or community or barangay like dishonesty, favoritism, abuse of environment or any unhealthy attitudes, do I remain mute to speak the truth for the good of many?

PHASE THREE RESPOND – with/ in my personal faith /community faith story

Where is Jesus leading me as he said: ***Ephphatha*** or ***be opened*** in my life of believing, hoping and loving? What concrete actions can I do to give way to God?



CLOSING PRAYER

Any appropriate song or thanksgiving prayer for the gift of faith, hope and love

BACKGROUND FOR THE CATECHISTS

The Theological Virtues

CCC 1814 Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God."⁷⁸ For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work[s] through charity.

CCC 1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

The initiative for this healing miracle did not come from the deaf man himself. It was others who brought Jesus to him. It was these people of good will who "begged him to lay his hand on Charity **CCC1822 Charity** is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

CCC 1823 Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end,"⁹⁷ he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you

