

Fr Rudy's Reflections
The Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 8, 2024

Ephphatha: Be Opened!

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

This Sunday we encounter a powerful moment in the Gospel of Mark (7:31-37) when Jesus heals a deaf man with a speech impediment. The word Jesus utters, "*Ephphatha*," meaning "Be opened," resonates deeply, calling us to open our hearts, minds, and spirit to God's grace and transformative power.

In this passage Jesus takes the infirmed man aside from the crowd, touches his ears and tongue, and looks up to heaven before commanding, "Be opened." This intimate act of healing reflects the personal relationship Jesus seeks with each of us. The command "*Ephphatha*" is not just a literal interpretation for us to behold—the physical miracle of healing. If we dive deeper into its symbolism, this event is a profound invitation for all of us to open ourselves to the fullness of life that Christ offers. We live in a world where noise and distractions can deafen us to God's voice. Our spiritual ears can become clogged with worries, doubts, and the relentless demands of everyday life. Jesus's call to "Be opened" urges us to steer away from the distractions in our lives, discomforts that might challenge our views, and our innate self-centeredness that seems so valued in our modern culture. Let us begin to listen more deeply and attentively to the word of God.

Reflecting on this passage, we must consider what areas of our lives need opening. Are our hearts hardened by past hurts, making it difficult to forgive and love fully? Are our minds closed to new insights and understandings of our faith, clinging instead to rigid interpretations that limit our spiritual growth? Are our spirits weighed down by fear and anxiety, preventing us from embracing the peace that Christ offers? Jesus desires to heal our inner wounds and to restore our ability to communicate with him. Moreover, "*Ephphatha*" calls us to be open to the needs of others. Like Jesus, we are invited to reach out to those who are marginalized, to those who feel voiceless or unheard. Our acts of kindness and compassion can become instruments through which God's grace flows into the world.

As we reflect on this Gospel passage, let us pray for the grace to be truly open. Let us ask the Lord to touch the areas of our lives that need healing, to open our ears to his word, our minds to his truth, and our hearts to his love. And may we, in turn, become instruments of his grace, bringing healing and hope to those around us. May the words of Jesus, "*Ephphatha*," inspire us to live out our faith with courage, compassion, grace, and a profound sense of connection to God and to each other.

"I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is a friend of silence. We need to listen to God because it's not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters."—St. Teresa of Calcutta

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy