

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

**What is the Gospel saying? Mark 7:31-37**— Page 1

**What is the Church saying Past and Present?** Pages 1-3

**What is God saying to you through this passage?** Page 4

## **Gospel Reading – Mark 7:31-37 –Roman Missal**

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 hands on him. He took him off by himself away 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.”

## **Spiritual Reading**

*From Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor. On Baptism; A Catechetical Instruction.*

In which, treating of the sacraments, of which it was not fitting to speak to them before this (being catechumens), the Saint comes to the mystery of, The Opening, which, he teaches, was established by Christ in the healing of the man who was deaf and dumb. I shall now begin to instruct you on the sacraments you have received; of whose nature it was not fitting to speak to you before this; for in the Christian what come first is faith. And at Rom for this reason those who have been baptized are called the faithful (fideles). And it was through faith that Abraham our faith was justified, and not by works (Rom. iv. 2). Therefore, it was because you believed that you received baptism. It would be wrong for me to think otherwise; you would not have been called to grace unless Christ had deemed you worthy of it. What then did we perform on Saturday last? The mystery of The Opening. And the mystery of The Opening was commemorated when the priest touched your ears and nostrils. And this Our Lord Jesus Christ laid down for us in the Gospel, when they brought Him one who was deaf and dumb, and He touched his ears and his mouth: his ears because he was deaf; his mouth because he was dumb. And He said: Ephpheta. This is a Hebrew word, and means: Be thou opened. The priest therefore touched your ears, that they might be opened to the words and to the exhortation of the priest. But you will say to me: Why does he touch the nostrils? Christ touched the mouth, for it was there that man was dumb: so that he who could not speak of the heavenly mysteries might receive a voice from Christ. He touched him there because he was a man. Here however, since women also are to be baptized and since the purity of the servant is not the same as that of the Master – what comparison can there be

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between them; for the one yields to sin, the Other forgives it, - so, our of reverence for the sacred rite, and because of the sanctity of his office, the bishop does not touch the mouth, but the nostrils; that you may receive the good odour of eternal charity, and that you may say: We are the good odour of Christ unto God, as the holy Apostle said (II Cor. ii. 15); and that you may be filled with the fragrance of faith and devotion.

**The Mute and Deaf Man (Sacramental Life) – Lesson and Discussion**

“He took him off by himself...”

**How does the action and word of Jesus Christ and the reception and response of the deaf and mute man in the Gospel teach about the Sacramental Life?** Each line of the Gospel teaches us an aspect of the Sacramental Life. The line, “And immediately the man’s ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly” is discussed in the Lesson: The Effects of the Sacraments.

“He [Jesus] took him off by himself away”

In Divine Revelation God reveals Himself throughout history, this Revelation begins with a couple (Adam and Eve) and slowly expands to a family (Noah), a tribe (Abraham), a nation (Moses), a kingdom (David), and finally through Jesus Christ and the Church to all nations. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.”[1] God’s revelation expands throughout time, but what we see in the Sacraments is this love that has been given to every person is now directed and focused in on the individual person. Sacraments are not performed in groups; they are individual. Each person is taken “off by himself” and personally touched and spoken to. Just as twins, who share the same womb, come out of that womb individually and have their own birth, so to sacramentally twins would have their own spiritual birth. This is why in the Sacraments we are not called by “group” but rather called by “name”.

“spitting, touched his tongue”

A Sacrament is an outward sign. All Sacraments have matter or element. As the body is necessary to human life, so too is matter or element necessary for the Sacraments.

“then he looked up to heaven and groaned” – Jesus is showing us the source of the Sacrament. Sacraments give us grace, the divine life.

Sacraments are instituted by Christ, who is God, and entrusted to the Church, who is guided by the Holy Spirit. Sacraments are not the work of man, nor are they magic; the source of grace is God. The Sacraments have been criticized as being magic or the work of man, both are untrue and we must work hard to clarify these misconceptions. The word Hocus Pocus, which is a reference to magic, is directly making fun of the prayers of Consecration “Hoc est enim Corpus Meum”. Hocus Pocus comes from “Hoc est Corpus” which in translated “This is Body” To say that the words of Consecration is magic is sacrilege.

“and said to him, “Ephphatha!” – that is, “Be opened!”

A Sacrament is an outward sign of an inner grace. All Sacraments have word of form. As the soul is necessary to human life, so too is the word or form necessary for the Sacraments. It is the soul that animates the body, and so too it is the word or form that animates the matter and element making the Sacrament valid. Many religions use matter and elements but what makes the ritual null and void is the fact that the word or form does not have the power and authority of God. Magic for example uses matter and elements, but the word or form does not come from God. This is why in some examination of conscience guides it will ask if we have participated in horoscopes, fortune tellers, palm readings, tarot card readings, or have used Ouija boards. All of these things uses supposed false power not from God, but from magic and claim this “magic” to be true. In the case of word or form we have if it comes from God, from an angel (Satan and his demons are fallen angels), or from man. We know that Jesus is true God and true man and that all Sacraments were instituted by Him, with His very words. Magic therefore is a mockery of the Sacraments and for this reason is the sin not only of sacrilege but also a sin against the first commandment, “Have no other gods beside me”.

“He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.”

The Sacraments should spark within us zeal to proclaim the Gospel. The deaf and mute man told everyone about the grace he had received from Christ. This zeal gave glory to God, but also would draw others to Christ, so they too would receive healing. Our zeal and Sacramental Life should give glory to God and draw others to the Sacramental life, which is the Life of Christ.

They were exceedingly astonished and they said, “He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

When we live out the Sacramental Life, the Life of Christ, people will be “exceedingly astonished” and we will give Glory to God. People will say of God, “He has done all things well.” When people witness a husband and wife living out a Sacramental Marriage, people will be astonished. They will say that God has done all things well in this couple. Those who see the marriage will be inspired also to have a Sacramental Marriage if marriage is their vocation. Those who see the contrition and penance of a sinner who repents and goes to confession will be astonished and will say that God has done all things well in this person, they too will be inspired and reconciled with God.

**“The End” Notes**

[1] Matthew 28:19 [2] Matthew 28:19-20 [3] Matthew 28:16 [4] Matthew 10:27