

**“‘Ephphatha!’ that is, ‘Be Opened!’”**  
and...  
**“They were exceedingly astonished...”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, there was a woman who had a deaf friend. When she asked her friend what she wanted for her birthday, her friend said:

**“Would you write to Ann Landers and ask her to reprint a prayer she has for deaf people? She printed it once before in her column, but I lost my copy of it.”**

The woman wrote to Ann Landers.

On June 1, her friend’s birthday, Ann reprinted the prayer in her column. A portion of it reads:

**“O God, the trouble with being deaf is that most people find deaf folks a nuisance. They sympathize with people who are blind or lame, but they get irritated and annoyed with people who are deaf. The result is that the deaf tend to avoid people and get... more and more ‘shut in.’”**

I think that portion of the prayer points out something about deaf people that few of us realize. Most of us think that blindness is far worse than deafness. **But**...and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life again, Helen Keller, who was deaf **AND** blind, considered deafness the far greater handicap in life. She said,

**“When you can’t hear, a lot of doors... in the ‘normal’ world... slam shut.”**

Turning on the radio is pointless. Watching television is bland at best and often hopelessly boring. Conversing with someone is next to impossible. After a while, one feels lonely... abandoned.

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I share that story of the deaf person because it affords us a better appreciation of today’s Gospel, which I/deacon just read to you from St. Mark. It gives us a better insight into how the deaf and dumb man felt AFTER Jesus healed him. For the first time in his life, he felt a part... of ‘life.’

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Now, this raises a question:

**WHY? Why did Jesus heal the deaf and dumb man, you ask.**  
**Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

One answer is found in today’s 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

Describing some of the signs that will take place when the Messiah comes, therein, Isaiah says:

**“The deaf will hear...and those who cannot speak will shout for joy.”**

By healing the deaf and dumb man, Jesus fulfills two of the signs that Isaiah says will help people recognize the Messiah.

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**But** the healing also tells us something personal about **Jesus**. It tells us that he is a compassionate person. We see this, especially, in the **WAY** Jesus heals the man...**‘off’ & AWAY** from the crowd.

Deaf people, as you can imagine, are often embarrassed by their ‘situation.’ Often, they can’t understand the simplest of questions. They feel different and out of place...all the time, in public.

By taking the man away from the crowd, Jesus shows real compassion and real sensitivity.

So-besides pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, the healing of the man points to a compassionate Jesus.

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Finally, and perhaps the most important point of this whole ‘healing’ episode:

The healing of the deaf-mute is a source of **hope** for many people today—people...like you & me!

*Allow me to explain. The deaf and dumb man's plight is not unlike our own. Many of us, today, in this room, within the sound of my voice, are deaf and dumb—not physically, but spiritually!*

*What do I mean? Perhaps a concrete example will help:*

**Once upon a time**, a mother and father were returning home after visiting their seriously ill daughter in the hospital. As they drove away, the mother sobbed. Finally, she said to her husband:

**“Ron, I don't know what's happening to me. Ten years ago, I would have been able to pray my heart out for our daughter. I'd have been able to talk to God about her. And I'd have been able to hear God tell me, 'Don't worry.' But, I can't do that anymore. I can't pray any longer. I can't speak to God as I used to. And I can't hear God speak to me. It's as though I've suddenly become spiritually deaf and dumb.”**

*That story describes a situation to which many of us can relate. We, too, find it hard to pray as we used to. We, too, find it hard to speak to God. We find it hard to hear God speak to us. Even when we receive Communion, it's nothing close to the excitement & joy of our First Communion! If this, to some degree, reflects our 'situation,' what can we do about it? Where's the answer?*

*The answer, my friends, is in today's Gospel. We can do what the deaf and dumb man did. With a new awareness of our spiritual 'situation,' we can seek out Jesus, **“go off”** with him—**“away”** from the crowd—perhaps on a weekend Retreat!—and spend some time in his healing presence.*

*Today's Gospel is inviting us to give Jesus an opportunity to touch our tongue to loosen it, spiritually, and to put his fingers in our ears and open them, spiritually.*

*More concretely, today's Gospel is inviting us to do something many of us have lost the habit of doing. It's inviting us to set aside a few minutes for daily prayer to let Jesus do for us what he did for the deaf and dumb man.*

*It's inviting us to let Jesus heal us...of our deafness, of our dumbness, of our brokenness.*

*I close with this prayer:*

**O Lord, I always mean to do what is right...  
And usually succeed in doing so.  
I love my family and they love me.  
**BUT**... something seems to be missing.  
Help me to feel your 'closeness,' as I once did.  
Lord, help me to slow down.  
Touch my ears...that I may hear you speak.  
Touch my lips... that I may proclaim your love.  
Touch my soul...that I may feel your presence.  
Amen.**

*May our ever-present, ever-perfect God, our Abba, bless you and be a part of your daily life...*

*The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*