

- We heard from Mark's Gospel today, and it's helpful to remember that Mark wrote primarily for a non-Jewish audience...probably for the growing Church in Rome.
 - Mark is an action-packed Gospel, and thus the symbol for his Gospel is the lion, signifying the courage that the Christian disciple must have.
 - Matthew's symbol is the winged man, symbolizing the incarnation of God in Jesus...Luke's symbol the gentle ox because he emphasizes Jesus' gentleness...and John's symbol is the eagle because, though he uses the simplest Greek of all the Gospels, his theology is the loftiest and most soaring.
 - Mark today shows us, as Mark often does, how Jesus sought out and ministered not only to Jews, but also to the Gentiles. For Jesus did not come as Savior for Jews only, but for the world.
 - Mark's stories of Jesus' ministrations to Gentiles would help give courage and strength of devotion of his Roman convert audience, who may have likely been suffering persecution when Mark wrote.
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- Now, in this Gospel, Jesus is traveling north of Israel—the region of Tyre & Sidon, in modern Lebanon...and then goes to the Decapolis—an area of 10 primarily Greek towns to the northeast and east of His native Galilee, and made up in large part by the descendants of Greek soldiers who fought in that area under Alexander 300 years before. Over time the Decapolis became a mixture of Greek, Roman and native Semitic cultures.
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 - Mark recounts a story of Jesus healing a deaf-mute...who himself symbolizes Gentiles as a whole...unhearing of the Word of God...

their prayers to pagan gods simply inane babble like the noise from this man with the speech impediment.

- But...like the deaf man's friends who saw Jesus for who He was and sought Him out to cure their friend, the disciples of Christ ask—and help—Jesus to bring truth and knowledge to those who do not yet hear or believe in Him.
- Thus Jesus, in answer to the man's friends' "prayers", opens the man's ears to hear and his mouth to speak...
- ...doing this by gestures and physical substance, just as He will when He cures the blind man in the next chapter.
- In this mode of operating Jesus foreshadows His Church's use of prayer and physical signs as vehicles of God's grace to His children in the sacraments: *Physical signs. Instituted by Christ. To give grace.*
- For we are both physical and spiritual, so God utilizes both to signify healing for us.
- By the sacraments of the Church—baptism, confession, confirmation, marriage, anointing of the sick, holy orders...and most especially the Eucharist...the grace of God flows upon the world, upon us and His Church...sacraments celebrated through physical actions and material things—the spoken word, water and oil, pouring and anointing, bread and wine, eating and drinking.
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- Now Jesus could have cured this man with only a word, but He is showing for the future Church elements of sacramental action.
- But also, in the curing of a Gentile man in particular, Jesus demonstrates His mission to cure both believers and unbelievers as well...for St. Paul assures us that God wants: "...*all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" (1Tim 2:4)
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- So, in this episode of Mark, Jesus partially fulfills the Isaian prophecy and sign for the world that the Messiah would cure the deaf...and the Gospels go on to recount His further curing of the lame and the blind.
- Yet...physical cures are by far secondary; it is the curing and cultivating of the soul which leads to eternal life.
- So we, as Jesus disciples, continue to help the religiously blind to see God in Jesus, the deaf to listen to His Word, the lame to walk strongly in the path of Christ, and the mute to pronounce God's praise and thanksgiving.
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- Through OUR fidelity many blind can see the light of faith; others who had closed their ears can hear eternal truths. In this way WE become "sacramental"—conduits of God's grace. What greater charity could there be?
- ...for Heaven is God's plan and longing for all, and... "*...God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16)

Reading 1
[Is 35:4-7a](#)

Thus says the LORD:

Say to those whose hearts are frightened:

Be strong, fear not!

Here is your God,

he comes with vindication;

with divine recompense

he comes to save you.

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,

the ears of the deaf be cleared;

then will the lame leap like a stag,

then the tongue of the mute will sing.

Streams will burst forth in the desert,

and rivers in the steppe.

The burning sands will become pools,

and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10](#)

R. (1b) Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

Alleluia.

The God of Jacob keeps faith forever,

secures justice for the oppressed,

gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

Alleluia.

The LORD gives sight to the blind;

the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.

The LORD loves the just;

the LORD protects strangers.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

Alleluia.

The fatherless and the widow the LORD sustains,

but the way of the wicked he thwarts.

The LORD shall reign forever;

your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

Alleluia.

Reading II

[Jas 2:1-5](#)

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality
as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.
For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes
comes into your assembly,
and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in,
and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes
and say, “Sit here, please,”
while you say to the poor one, “Stand there,” or “Sit at my feet,”
have you not made distinctions among yourselves
and become judges with evil designs?

Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.
Did not God choose those who are poor in the world
to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom
that he promised to those who love him?

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.”