

Children's liturgy – Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

Preparing for worship

Colour: Green

Song suggestions: Sing it in the valleys (648, *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone*)

Welcome: Today we hear how Jesus helps a man who is deaf to hear and to speak more clearly. Let's think a bit more about listening and speaking out today...

Opening prayer: God of love, open our ears to hear your word, and open our hearts that we may always speak up for what is right. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

First reading (optional): Isaiah 35:4-7

Psalm: Psalm 145:7-10 r. 1

Gospel acclamation: *Everyone stands and sings the Alleluia together.*

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

Jesus then left the neighborhood of Tyre and went on through Sidon to Lake Galilee, going by way of the territory of the Ten Towns. Some people brought him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak, and they begged Jesus to place his hands on him. So Jesus took him off alone, away from the crowd, put his fingers in the man's ears, spat, and touched the man's tongue. Then Jesus looked up to heaven, gave a deep groan, and said to the man, "Ephphatha," which means, "Open up!"

At once the man was able to hear, his speech impediment was removed, and he began to talk without any trouble. Then Jesus ordered the people not to speak of it to anyone; but the more he ordered them not to, the more they told it. And all who heard were completely amazed. "How well he does everything!" they exclaimed. "He even causes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak!"

*(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation® and used with permission.)**

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from today's reading?

Jesus meets a man who cannot hear, and who has a problem with his speech. What does Jesus do to the man?

Jesus puts his fingers in the man's ears, touches his tongue, and prays for the man to "be opened".

The man is able to hear and to speak more clearly. How do you think he must have felt?

Jesus tells the crowd not to tell anyone, but they go around telling everyone! Why do you think they tell everyone?

The crowd are so happy and amazed at what Jesus has done that they feel everyone should know what he can do.

Sometimes we all find it difficult to listen. Can you think of a time when you didn't listen well to what someone was saying?

Perhaps you were being asked to lay the table or make your bed, and you didn't really want to do it. Perhaps you didn't think what the other person was saying was important?

What other reasons can you think of for not listening well to what people are saying?

Sometimes we all find it difficult to speak up – especially if we see that someone is doing something wrong or if we are afraid of being laughed at. It can be hard to stand up for what we know is right. It can be hard to speak out for what we believe in.

Can you think of a time when you knew you should say something but it was hard to do?

When we look at the world we can see lots of things that are wrong. We are all part of God's family – a family that includes everyone in the world – but some of our brothers and sisters around the world live in poverty.

Some of us do not have enough to eat. Some of us do not have the chance to go to school and learn. But some of us have too much food and throw lots of it away. And some of us have so many possessions that we do not know what to do with them all.

Do you think this is right? Do you think it is fair? Why not?

It is not always easy to speak out for what we believe in, but Jesus asks us to try.

Will you speak out this week for what you know is right? Will you try to stand up for what you believe in even if it is difficult?

A better world needs all of us to play our part. If you could say one thing to change the world we live in and make it a fairer and more just place, what would it be?

Intercessions *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

We know that God always listens and hears us when we pray, and so we pray together...

We pray for the Church throughout the world: that it may be a voice of truth, speaking out against things that are wrong and standing up for what is right. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our brothers and sisters around the world: that they may be able to speak out, make their voices heard and make a change in their own communities. Lord in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, families and friends: that we may listen to others and speak out when we know that something is wrong, so all people have the chance to live a happy and healthy life, free from poverty. Lord, in your mercy...

Closing prayer: God of all, give us the courage to stand up and make our voices heard, to speak out for a world where all people have the chance to live free from poverty. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Invite the children to colour in the accompanying illustration and in the speech bubble to write or draw what they would say to try and make the world a fairer place for all to live in.

Encourage the children to write a couple of sentences about what they would change to make the world a fairer place. Perhaps they could stand up and say it out loud to the group.

Play a game of Chinese whispers with the children, encouraging them to listen really carefully to what is being said to them.

Invite the children to act out a scenario where they see or hear something that is not right, and what they would do about it.

Remind the children to tell the people at home all that they have heard and thought about today. Encourage them to listen well to everything that they are told during the coming week and to try to speak out when they see something that they know is wrong.

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