



CELEBRATING AT HOME  
**23RD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME**

*Loosening the ligaments (Mk 7:31-37)*



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### Sign of the Cross

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

**Amen.**

We are the body of Christ.

**We are gathered with the whole Church,  
in this moment of prayer.**

### Preparing to hear the Word

Lord Jesus,  
**you call us to life and freedom.**

Lord Jesus,  
**open our ears to the word of salvation.**

Lord Jesus,  
**open our mouths to tell of your love.**

### Scripture Reading (Mark 7:31-37)

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers in the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said, 'and he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

### Reflection - *Loosening the ligaments*

Because of COVID lockdowns and travel restrictions many experience a sense of isolation. Even with the benefits of modern technology and social media we can still feel cut off from those

dear to us, unable to leave our homes, go to work, meet up with friends. We share something of the experience of man in this Sunday's Gospel. He cannot hear, and cannot speak properly. Living in the ancient world that must have been a profoundly isolating, frightening and frustrating experience for him.

The people ask Jesus to lay a hand on the man. There were many travelling healers at that time, so the people's request does not imply that they know who Jesus really is, only perhaps his reputation as a healer.

Jesus takes the man aside, away from the crowd, puts his fingers into the man's ears and touches his tongue with spittle. Both are deeply intimate gestures and somewhat confronting. I wonder what it must have been like to be that man. How much did he understand about what Jesus was doing? Being deaf, did he even know what the crowd had asked Jesus to do for him?

Jesus looks up to heaven, sighs and says 'Ephphatha,' – 'Be opened!' All at once the man can hear and speak clearly. The man's social isolation is ended. Now he can enter fully into relationship with other people. The man rejoices, the people rejoice and, even though Jesus asks them not to, they tell the story everywhere.

In telling this story Mark seems to suggest that without the intimate, healing touch of Jesus we remain deaf both to the voice of God and the cries of others, and unable to enter fully into relationship with either. We remain closed and crippled within ourselves, unable to hear the Word of God or pass it on to others. But once touched by the power and spirit of Jesus we are opened to the Word made flesh and God's vision for human life. Our inner ligaments, the things that once choked the Life within us, begin to be loosened and we begin to speak clearly of God's loving concern for all humanity in every word and action.

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### Prayers of Intercession

Open our ears O God,  
that we may hear your voice,  
in the busyness and in the boredom,  
in certainty and in doubt,  
in noise and in silence.

Open our ears to listen to  
the whisper of the hopeless  
and the cry of the anguished and forgotten.

Open our mouths, O God;  
to speak of your goodness  
and to proclaim your praise.

Open us to your healing, O God

### Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,  
we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

### Closing Prayer

God of love,  
make us quick to respond  
to the many ways you call to us each day.  
May we speak of your goodness all the days of  
our lives. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### Blessing

May the love of God,  
carry us gently through the coming week. Amen.



# *Light and Love in the darkness*



This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when we cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.



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