



DARE TO DREAM

Autumn Series

Week Beginning September 5th

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Before you begin your reflections...

There has been much talk about everything getting back to normal now that the pandemic appears to be receding. However, to simply believe that we just go back to how we were, has the potential for us to miss an opportunity to 'refresh, renew and re-engage' as parish communities. We are all different people because of the pandemic. Lives have changed. It is true to say that the pandemic has made many of us stop and think. Do we just want to return to how things were? What might we hold onto and what might we let go of? There is much to ponder. If we do want to embrace the new world, we are being offered we will need to have open hearts and open minds, confidence, hope and above all faith that God is on this journey with us. As we move through this new series of 'Dare to Dream', let us pray that we have the courage to respond with generous hearts to all that the Lord is asking of us. May we see the needs of others and put them before our own personal desires. Jesus says to us 'Ephphatha', 'be opened', so let us allow the Holy Spirit to move where she wants to move that the Lord's will be done now and, in the years ahead, for us, the people of Clifton Diocese.

Video - Watch and listen to Fr. Thomas Lawes

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of Mark 7:31-37

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly.

Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

- Take some time to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Reflections

- Where in your life do you feel you need healing?
- All of us have times when we are 'deaf'. Where or when do you find yourself unable to hear?
- What does it mean to you to have a voice and where or when do you least feel able to speak?

Now thinking about your parish and local community

- Who are the silent members of your parish and how might you enable them to have a voice?
- As the pandemic recedes, where is there likely to be a need for healing?
- Jesus heals a deaf man through touch and the words 'Ephphatha' that is 'Be opened'! In what ways is Jesus calling your community to be more open to his wisdom and word?
- In the letter of St. James, he urges his community to show no partiality based on wealth or social standing. How does your parish seek to treat all as equals in the eyes of God?

Action

- As our parishes start to reengage, this is a time also to renew and refresh. Using the resources on the Diocesan website (*Renew, Refresh Reengage*) take some time to consider what your parish might need to focus on and organise different groups to respond. Ensure that everyone has a voice to express their hopes and desires.
- Join Clifton and Northampton Dioceses in a three-part webinar series – starting with Fr. Nicholas King SJ speaking about Christian hospitality as seen in the Gospel of Luke. If you can't join on the night (6th September at 7.30pm) then it will be possible to access the webinar after the event. See the website for more details.

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to respond.