

## ***Fifth Sunday of the Assumption – Human Contact***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church, Carrollton, TX  
September 10, 2017  
Gospel Reading: Mark 7:31-37*

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

An elderly woman by the name of Mary made frequent trips to the branch post office. One day she faced a long line of people who were waiting for service from the postal clerks. Mary only needed stamps, so a helpful observer asked, “Why don’t you use the stamp machine? You can get all the stamps you need and you won’t have to stand in line.” Mary said, “I know, but the machine can’t ask me about my arthritis.”

Mary needed that personal connection, something we all crave and which we see in today’s Gospel reading. We hear of how Jesus is passing through the region of the Decapolis and a crowd brings a man who is deaf and mute. Christ takes the man away from the crowd and in private He puts His fingers in the man’s ears. He then spits and holds the man’s tongue, looks up to heaven, lets out a sigh and says, “Ephphatha”, which means, “be opened”. Immediately the man’s ears are opened and he is able to speak clearly. Christ orders him not to say anything to anyone, but he does and everyone is amazed.

This is a moving and touching miracle because the Gospel says, “Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd”. Let us put ourselves in this deaf man’s position. We are deaf and cannot hear anything. We see the world around us and people interacting and conversing, but we are not able to do any of that. In fact, the Greek word that is usually translated for mute in this reading is more precisely translated as “having difficulty speaking”. So he could say some things, but could not hear the responses.

Think of the darkness and fear he must have lived in. Imagine the crowd coming and forcibly taking him to Jesus. This deaf man does not know who Jesus is and no one can explain to him who Jesus is – remember sign language would not be invented for another 1,900 years. So now this man is in front of Christ and then Christ puts His fingers in his ears and grabs his tongue. What could be going through this man’s mind? What would be going through our minds?

Yet, Jesus knew that this man needed a personal connection; he needed personal contact and He gave it to him by taking him away from the crowd and making the deaf man His entire world.

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But there is one more thing that today's Gospel reading teaches us. When God speaks to us, He calls us away from the noises of the world to speak and communicate with us so only He is heard. Years ago a carpenter lost a good watch in his workshop. He offered a reward to his employees. They searched and searched with rakes through the sawdust on the floor for hours to no avail. – Then at lunch a small boy, who had seen what was going on, went in and came out in a short time with the watch. When asked how he found it he said, "I just sat down in the sawdust and quietly waited until I heard the watch ticking!"

All of us want to hear God's voice, but to do so we must remove ourselves from the busyness of the world and from all the worries, anxieties and fears that are so loud. When we do this, we are able to open our hearts and ears to His love, commandments and voice.

We all are deaf and have trouble speaking with God at one time or another in our lives, but to fix that disability and come into true communion with God, we must come out of this world and the busy, hectic lives we live and focus on listening only to God's voice which says to us, "Be opened! Be open to My commandments, the life I have prepared for you and to My will, which will lead you closer to Me".

Amen.