

September 9, 2018 (check this date)

We had our third rattlesnake incident in four weeks. This time at the front door. A woman wearing flip flops almost stepped on him, but she screamed in time to warn everybody else. So I must remind you guys to be vigilant. The Arizona Republic says snakes love September. Well they also seem to like Saint Michael the Archangel, so be careful. We don't know if it's the same guy coming back or if we have a nest around here somewhere. Watch where you're going. When you walk by those little plants by the sidewalk, be careful. I don't want anybody getting bit and have to go to the hospital because you were coming to church, and you'd forget about your donation... You know I care more about you than your money, come on.

There was an elderly gentleman and he slowly became hard of hearing. But you know elderly gentleman when they become hard of hearing they are like, "I'm not hard of hearing, you just need to talk louder, you are whispering." So finally his family told him, "You need to get a hearing aid or else." So he went to the audiologist and the guy was able to fit him with hearing aids that were almost invisible and he could hear 100%. A month later he came in for his follow-up and the audiologist said, "Wow they're working great, your family must be really happy that you can hear." He said, "I haven't told them yet, I've changed my will three times."

To be deaf in the Bible is a spiritual thing. Yes, there are physical deaf people in the Bible but to be deaf means God is not getting through to you, because God identifies himself as, "Word." God identifies himself as, "Voice." Words and voices come through hearing and if you're not hearing God you're deaf. The reading today is about us as well as this deaf man. If you are born deaf, even if you get your hearing later in life you still can't speak properly, you still have an impediment. Because your brain, they have shown, learns to talk and wires itself for speech in the first three years. Now I know babies sometimes don't talk until they are four or five, my brother waited until he was four to talk and later on we asked him why and he said I didn't want to sound stupid by not talking in complete sentences. So deafness is a spiritual thing, it's a spiritual malady, it's what the Bible's all about.

In today's gospel Jesus is in an interesting location in Israel. Jesus is in the Decapolis. This Decapolis is 10 cities of Greek origin, a Hellenistic culture we say. They prefer Greek things over Hebrew things over Jewish things. This is located south and east of the Sea of Galilee. Interestingly enough, one of the names of the cities in the Decapolis is Philadelphia. There were two Philadelphia's way before we had the one we have. So Jesus is in a pagan or semi pagan environment. And it's interesting because when Jesus does a miracle, normally somebody in the family or the person themselves has to ask Jesus because they don't want to get in trouble with the religious authorities. But in this instance the people because they're not so religious, they don't care about the Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees, those groups. They bring him to Jesus and say, "Please lay your hands on him, you can cure him we've seen you do this before." So Jesus says, "Okay." But He does something unique, He takes him away from the crowd, all by himself, personalized service. Why? Because our society is so noisy, sometimes we can't hear what we need to hear. We don't focus our ears on what we need to hear. We have traffic, we have the electronics in our lives, when we go anywhere we have people talking constantly. I get in cars when I have to get a ride and they have to have the radio on. I get in my car and there's no radio playing because I like to drive and think and meditate and listen. We have so much noise. God wants to be heard. We go to the book of Kings with Elisha. Elisha is looking for God, he's waiting to hear the voice of God. So he leaves the city and goes out in the desert and he waits. A fire comes, an earthquake comes, a

thunderstorm comes, God's not there. But a small whispering wind comes and there's God. A special sound, a sound that we have to have our ears attuned to in order to hear it. So this man is taken away from the noise of the world to be with God, to listen to the voice of God when he gets the chance. Then Jesus does interesting things that he doesn't do to anybody else. He puts his finger in the man's ear and spitting, He puts his spittle on the man's tongue. "Gross", We say today, but back then if you were a healer, if you were a holy person, or a religious person because you spoke the Word of God, your saliva was seen as having curative medicinal properties, healing properties. So it wasn't unusual for them to spit in someone else's mouth. And then He looked up to heaven and groaned. Why? Because He was getting in touch with the Father. Jesus does nothing without the Father's will, without the Father's okay. So he is looking up and he's communing, getting in touch, plugging into the Father. He groaned because that is from the core of His being. When we get something out of the core of our being that means we are truly affected, we are truly looking for help. He's got His fingers in the man's ears, so Jesus is connected to God, God is going through Jesus to the man's ears to heal him.

This is an image of the Church, because what does Jesus do for us? He intercedes with the Father so that we can have the graces, we can have healing, we can have what we pray for in Jesus's name. Jesus said, "In my name ask and it will be given." So Jesus is connecting into the Father, Jesus is connecting where He needs to connect. And sometimes we have to remember, yes we can pray to Jesus, we also should include the Father and say, "If it's Your will God, let Jesus do this for me. Jesus is doing this whole Church thing. Whenever we come to church, whenever we come and have the sacraments, we are connecting with God the Father. All of our prayers in the missal are about God the Father, "Through Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord amen." Through the father. Yet we are receiving Jesus Christ, He's putting himself into our whole body not just into our ears. So holy Communion, the Eucharist is a tremendous moment of healing if we but let it. And we see another word in here, there's two words in Scripture that we know of that are ancient Aramaic which Jesus spoke; "*Ephphatha!*" (to be open). So we get to see some of Jesus's language. There is one village in the whole world left where they speak Aramaic and it's slowly dying out they're trying to record it.

"And the man spoke plainly." Not only did Jesus restore his hearing, He restored the part of his brain that needed to be fixed so he could speak plainly. Now, this man has received the Word of God, now he can speak plainly. For us, receiving the Word of God means the same thing, we should be able to speak plainly. First we have to open our ears to that special channel, that special frequency that God is on. We do that by reading the Bible. Reading the Bible is the only thing that allows us to know who Jesus Christ truly is. To know what He's about, to know what He's going to do and can do. If we don't read the Bible, we don't truly tune into God. Back in the 50s and before if you went and had a college education, you would learn the Bible in school because it is classical literature. Because it's so fundamental to the foundation of our modern society and yet today it's outlawed. If you go teach in a Catholic school, say I go to Notre Dame and teach a class, (I have friends who've had this experience) whole class full of Catholic students in Notre Dame and they mention a Scripture verse, they get blank stares. These kids have never heard Scripture. They've never read Scripture. It makes it a very daunting task to try to evangelize because we are supposed to speak plainly. We hear the word evangelize and we're like, "What's that, how do I do that? I don't know what to say." What if we read Scripture, if we meditate on who Jesus is and truly is and we ask the Holy Spirit for help, we can explain Scripture we can explain plainly and that becomes the evangelization. But first off we want to hear the Word of God. We go someplace quiet, not with anything going on, because God can't get through the radio, God can't get

through the MP3 player, God can't get through the computer, whatever. We have to be quiet because God is found in the whispering wind not in loud noise. When we read Scripture, go someplace where God is, God can let us know what to say. Otherwise it's no good, we don't know Jesus, we don't recognize God when he comes, and we can't help others be healed of their spiritual deafness. So it's up to us to tune into the frequency that Jesus is on, that God is on, so that He can cure us of our deafness. He can cure our speech, fix that part of the brain that isn't doing what it's supposed to. So that we can do what He does; bring hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, salvation to those who need it.

God bless you.