

## *From Disturbance to Restoration*

Throughout the past month we have heard newscasters caution, “The images you are about to see may be disturbing.” As a member of the human family, we see our brothers and sisters in Christ suffering the effects of new virus strains, violent weather, evacuations from homelands or the public mourning of deaths of beloved family members. The images *are* disturbing and we, disciples of Jesus Christ, respond with great sadness, anger at injustice, and a strong desire to do something. Reflecting on this Sunday’s Gospel will deepen our understanding of what we *can and must do* in response to human suffering.

Jesus’ mission in his suffering, death, and resurrection was to free us from our infirmities, restore us to full personhood, and claim victory over death. In today’s Gospel from Mark 7:31-37, Jesus provides us with images of healing and restoration.

As he travels through Decapolis, a Gentile region, Jesus is approached by people who know of his power and come to him with hope, begging him to “lay his hand” upon someone who is deaf and barely able to speak. Jesus’ power comes through six actions: 1.) taking the man aside; 2. placing fingers in his ears; 3. spitting; 4. touching the man’s tongue; 5. gazing heavenward and groaning; and 6. commanding that the man be healed, his hearing and speech restored. Jesus’ actions are effective because of his great empathy, because of the intimacy of using his body—hands, fingers, spit—to anoint the sufferer, and because of his relationship with his heavenly Father, the Creator of all life, who will hear prayer of a Son and, through him, provide healing.

While not to be desired, suffering is part of the human condition. By being instruments of the Good News of Jesus Christ, we are present to the suffering of our brothers and sisters. We do not ignore it or avoid it. Even though we may not see it, we have the power to make a difference. United to Christ, sons and daughters of our Father, we have the miraculous power of grace. Through our actions, healing miracles happen and improve the conditions of our brothers and sisters in need.

Our most efficacious sources of power are communal worship and personal prayer. Through the Eucharist, being offered somewhere every day at every hour, we are united and bring to Christ our love and concern for those who suffer. At our fingertips we have the healing power of intentional personal prayer. We can beg Christ to lay his hands on others and provide the graces of understanding, strength, and comfort. Prayer leads us to opportunities for hospitality and service to those have been forced to leave their homelands or endure shocking physical violence or mourn loved ones now residing in glory with the Resurrected Christ, the Healer and Restorer of Life.