

Take-Home Sheet | Session 7

Crumbs for the Children (Mark 7:1-8:26)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

We read the tradition controversy more carefully than the pamphlets do. Jesus' target in Mark 7 is precise: human traditions that NULLIFY the word of God, like Corban, the pious technicality for dodging "Honor your father and mother." Isaiah 29:13 names the disease: lips near, hearts far. And the New Testament itself distinguishes those "precepts of men" from the apostolic Tradition it commands us to keep: "hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15; see 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Timothy 2:2). Scripture and authentic Tradition flow from one wellspring (CCC 80-82), and the Bible's own table of contents reached us by Tradition's hands. The honest test is Jesus' own: does a tradition serve God's word, or void it?

Then the bread crossed the border. A Gentile mother took Jesus' hard test, "the children first", and turned his own metaphor with humble wit: "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." The only person in Mark to win an exchange with Jesus, and her crumbs became a banquet: back in the Decapolis, Jesus fed four thousand from seven loaves, seven hampers left over, twelve baskets in chapter 6 and seven hampers here, long read as Israel and then the nations. In between, *Ephphatha*, "Be opened": fingers, touch, and a word that opened deaf ears, ticking Isaiah 35's checklist for the day God comes, and echoing creation's verdict, "He has done all things well" (compare Genesis 1:31). The Church still speaks that word over the newly baptized.

And two questions still hanging in the air: in a boat with "one loaf" aboard, Jesus quizzed the Twelve on every basket-number and asked, "Do you not yet understand?" And at Bethsaida he healed a blind man in two touches, the man seeing "men like trees, walking" before seeing clearly. Bring both riddles back next week.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies, Book 3)

Had the apostles left no writings, we would follow the order of the Tradition they handed down to those to whom they committed the churches, as nations without paper and ink in fact did. Scripture and apostolic Tradition are not rivals but one deposit, guarded publicly where the succession of teachers is open for all to examine.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Matthew, on the Canaanite woman)

Rebuffed by silence and answered with a hard word, she neither despaired nor demanded, but pressed in with humility and wit, and found mercy. The delay was never refusal: Christ withheld the answer so that her hidden faith might be displayed and crowned, a lesson for everyone whose prayers meet with silence.

Voices of the Church: St. Ambrose of Milan (On the Mysteries, on the Ephphatha)

The opening rite of Baptism is the mystery Christ celebrated when he cured the deaf and dumb man with the word Ephphatha, "Be opened." In Ambrose's Milan the priest touched the ears and the nostrils, the ears opened to receive the word of God. Today's rite touches the ears and the mouth (CCC 1236), so that the newly baptized may hear God's word and profess the faith. What the Lord did in the Decapolis, his Church does sacramentally still.

Live It This Week

- Pray the vice list examen once this week: read Mark 7:21-22 slowly and let the Holy Spirit put his finger on the one item that is currently yours. Take it to Confession if it belongs there.
- Persist through one silence: pick the prayer you have quietly given up on and pray it daily this week, closing with the woman's words: "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."
- At the next Baptism you attend, listen for the Ephphatha and pray it over yourself: Lord, open my ears to your word and my mouth to profess it.

Scripture Memory Verse

"He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak." (Mark 7:37, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 8:27-9:1, slowly; it is short and it is the hinge of the entire Gospel. Jesus is going to ask a question on the road. Before the session, answer it yourself, in one written sentence: "But who do you say that I am?"

Catechism References

CCC 80-83, 1151-1152, 1236, 1335, 1852-1853