

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

23rd Sunday
in Ordinary Time, Year B
September 5, 2021

Fort Yuma, California | P. O. Box 1176, Winterhaven, CA 92283

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Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
Pastor

Entrance: — 708
Blest Be the Lord.
Offertory: — 695
Open My Eyes
Recessional: — 828
Go Make Of All Disciples



SATURDAYS:

3:15 pm to 4:15 pm – Holy Hour
3:45 pm to 4:15 pm – Confessions
4:30 pm – HOLY MASS

SUNDAYS:

7:15 am to 8:15 am – Holy Hour
7:45 am to 8:15 am – Confessions
8:30 am – HOLY MASS

This Weekend — September 4-5, 2021 — is Mission Appeal Weekend

Fr. Don O'Connor, a Divine Word Missionary Priest, is with us this Mission Appeal weekend (Sept. 4-5). He will say our two Sunday Masses. During the homily, he will speak about the many ministries of his religious community the Divine Word Missionaries. They are an international religious community of missionary priests and Brothers serving in 84 countries helping to build chapels, celebrate the sacraments, and spread the Word of God in the remote mission areas. To meet some of the people they help, please read the [stories](https://missionimpact.svdmissions.org/mission-update) at <https://missionimpact.svdmissions.org/mission-update>

Over 6,000 active missionaries travel to the far corners of the world building hospitals to care for the sick, educating the poor, teaching the hungry to farm, and providing life's necessities like drinkable water, food, and shelter. They help people neglected and forgotten by society to build a better future and foster vibrant Catholic communities of service and faith.

This Mission Appeal is part of the Mission Cooperation Program of our Diocese.

**A Second Collection for the Mission
Appeal of the Divine Word Missionaries
will be taken right after Holy Communion
TODAY.**

Please be generous in your support.

There are Mission Appeal envelopes at the back of the church, in case you forgot to take one after Mass last weekend or you left it at home.

REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE

Complaints about sexual abuse by a member of the clergy or by a parish employee can be made by contacting 858-490-8353 or at www.sdccatholic.org.

UNIVERSAL PRAYERS

CELEBRANT:

We all are in need of God's healing. Let us pray that God may touch us and open our minds and hearts to his teaching and the needs of the entire world.

LECTOR:

- 1) That all members of the Church will be consistent witnesses to our faith, leading others to realize God's grace through our words and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That all nations of the world will act to protect the poor and marginalized, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For the sick, especially those in constant agony, that they receive effective pain relief and experience God's restorative presence through caring health professionals, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That God on this Labor Day weekend will bless all those who work and also those who are unemployed and looking for new work, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all whose lives were forever changed twenty years ago on September 11, 2001, and for the thousands of victims who died in the attacks, that they may be at peace, comforted in the heart of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) For those in the military and their families who support them, that their efforts may restore peace and, if in harm's way, they may return home safely, let us pray to the Lord.
- 7) That God will bless those experiencing disasters worldwide. In particular, we pray for the desperate people of Afghanistan and Haiti and their countries in crisis, and for the Louisianans who are without power or water in the wake of Hurricane Ida, let us pray to the Lord.

CELEBRANT:

God of all, look with favor on your children and fulfill our most precious needs with the hope, love, and life that only you can bring through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aug. 28-29:
\$1,045.00

Via Online,
Aug. 29-31:
\$105.00



The Mystery of Faith:

Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross
and Resurrection,
you have set us free.

THE READINGS. . . SOME REFLECTIONS. . . AND GUIDEPOSTS.

Introduction to the Liturgy of the Word

Our God is a transformative God, bringing life to the wasteland and giving hope to people who appeared to be abandoned.

Isaiah, the prophet and poet, spoke to a society that equated deficiency with sinfulness, prophesying that God would transform the deaf, the blind, the disabled, and the mute.

Jesus does just that in the Gospel.

In between, James calls us to change the way we judge strangers we encounter.

Listening to today's readings, note the transformations we witness.

First Reading:

Isaiah 35:4-7a

Thus says the LORD: ⁴Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. ⁵Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; ⁶then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. ⁷The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

“Praise the Lord, my soul.”

⁶The God of Jacob keeps faith forever, ⁷secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets captives free.

R.

⁸The Lord gives sight to the blind; the Lord raises up those who were bowed down. The Lord loves the just; ^{9A}the Lord protects strangers.

R.

^{9B}The fatherless and the widow the Lord sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts. ¹⁰The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations.

R.

2nd Reading: James 2:1-5

¹My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. ²For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, ³and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here, please,” while you say to

the poor one, “Stand there,” or “Sit at my feet,” ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

The Word of the Lord.

Alleluia (Cf. Matthew 4:23)

Lector: Alleluia, Alleluia. **All:** Alleluia, Alleluia.

Lector: ²³Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people.

All: Alleluia, Alleluia.

Gospel Reading: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

³¹Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. ³²And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; ³⁴then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him,

“Ephphatha!” – that is, “Be opened!” ³⁵And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.

³⁷They were exceedingly astonished and they said, “He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

The Gospel of the

EPHPHATHA – BE OPENED!

Through the prophet Isaiah, God is speaking to the Israelites during their captivity in Babylon. In today's first reading, Isaiah gives a message of hope to the God fearing. For a better understanding and appreciation of this message, let us first bring to the fore once more what led to the captivity and Isaiah's denunciation of those who had forgotten God.

Instead of trusting in God, the kings of Israel relied on alliances with the pagan nations to ensure the kingdom's survival. As a punishment, God allowed the kingdom to collapse and the people became captives of the pagan nations.

Moreover, the ark of the covenant – the visible sign of God's presence among them -- vanished when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. Because of this, love of God as the source or reason for a person's external practice of the faith was slowly forgotten, and the formal and merely external actions of the rituals began to be seen as constituting a person's religion.

At the time of Jesus, the prevailing attitude of the Jews was that the formal and merely external actions of the rituals constituted a person's religion. Thus, in the gospel of last Sunday, Jesus opposed the Pharisees who displayed this attitude. Jesus said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: *This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*" (Mark 7:6).

In today's first reading, God speaks through Isaiah again. This time it is a message of hope especially to those who remained to be God fearing, who did not lose their trust in God despite the difficulties they were experiencing in captivity. Through Isaiah God declares that he is coming to bring vindication to those who always put their trust in God first: "*Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you.*" The signs: "*The eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared . . .*"

Today's Gospel reveals that this day has arrived in Jesus who heals the "deaf man who had a speech impediment" saying EPHPHATHA, that is to say, BE OPENED.

Now that our Lord Jesus has ceased to be among us in human form, he continues to be a real, visible presence as the Resurrected Christ in the Eucharist. Let us not lose personal contact with him in the Eucharist as the source and summit of our life.

To be noted also in today's Gospel passage is the very detailed description of where Jesus travels. The district of the Decapolis (ten cities) he mentions are in Gentile territory. It is to emphasize that Jesus' mission was to all the world, to Jews and Gentiles alike.

In last week's gospel, we heard Jesus saying, "Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person" in reference to the Judaic practice of ritual hand-washing (Mark 7:15).

Now Jesus travels outside Jewish territory and performs miracles to great acclaim among foreigners. Jesus values those who are outside, travels to them, and reaches out to them in mercy and love. There is no outsider, no foreigner, to God. God does not discriminate.

In today's second reading, James picks up on this theme where he spells out the evil of discrimination. "Show no partiality," he insists (James 2:1). Let us learn this lesson in a childlike manner:

"What is discrimination?" asked nine-year old Teddy. Sister Rita replied, "Discrimination is treating people badly because they don't look like you." Teddy added, "Jesus loves me, and he doesn't look like me?" "Yes," answered Sister Rita. "Jesus loves everybody, even those who don't look like him." Then Sister Rita said clearly, "**If Jesus loves everybody so can we.**"

It is also to be noted that the word *Ephphatha* is kept in its original Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, rather than translate it into Greek, like the rest of the Gospel, as Greek was the *lingua franca* of the known world at that time. "Be opened!" Jesus said to the deaf man regarding his ears.

Perhaps it is to ask us to be open to those who are outside our own communities, who speak a different language.

Perhaps it is to ask us to have our ears open to God's word and to proclaim it.

If we have trouble hearing what God wants to tell us, all we need to do is to ask him to open our ears for us. He will be only too glad to help.

Talk to the Risen Lord, really present in the Eucharist; experience his personal presence especially during the Consecration and the Actual reception of his person at Holy Communion of every Holy Mass.

For a longer, intensely personal and private encounter/conversation with him, spend a Holy Hour with him. That hour is holy because the Risen Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is there right in front of you.

Our Holy Hour schedule: 3:15 pm to 4:15 pm on Saturdays and 7:15 am to 8:15 am on Sundays. There is no Benediction at the end of our Holy Hour because it should flow into the Mass and thus, the blessing is at the end of the Mass: from the Holy Hour which is intensely personal and *private*, to the Mass which is also intensely personal but *not private* because there we are a tangible sign of being one body in the Lord.

Jesus did not want anyone to know that he did this healing (cf. Mark 7:36). The reason is that he does not want to be known primarily as a miracle worker. If people embrace Jesus only because he can cure physical illness or can grant us what we want in this world, then such a religion is hardly different from that of the pagans.

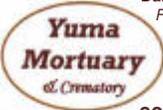
Our Lord's real identity must be first and foremost connected to his suffering, death, and resurrection, and not to his ability to do miracles. Thus, as followers of the Lord, when we suffer from illness of any kind, we must see it first and foremost as our participation in the suffering of the Lord. The suffering of the Lord was for the sake of others, for our salvation. So, when you encounter any suffering, tell the Lord that you accept it as your participation in his suffering. Make it also salvific, for others, like the Lord's suffering. Offer it for a particular intention. For example, you may say, "Lord, may my suffering alleviate the suffering of the people of Haiti." That is to say, may the length or gravity of their suffering be lessened as I cover some of it with my suffering. That indeed is a prayer that is not just lip service.

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