

5 SEPTEMBER 2021

Sunday Message

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: Green • Psalter Week 3

JESUS A MAGICIAN?

(MARK 7:31-37)



Jesus continues his journey through Gentile territory. Mark gives us a particularly detailed account of Jesus' healing a man who has no hearing and limited power of speech.

This recalls the promise in Isaiah of the signs which will accompany the saving coming of God to Israel. The reaction of the crowd that Jesus "has done all things well" reminds us of God surveying the completed Creation. Mark's vivid presentation has a couple of interesting features which would not be surprising in a setting familiar with stories of healing by magic: the groaning by Jesus, the placing of his finger in the ears, and the anointing of the person's tongue with spittle. However, Jesus cures the person by speaking, by word. Jesus is therefore superior to any pagan healers, just as Moses and Aaron are vindicated in their competition with the Egyptian magicians.

We find another Markan motif in this episode: Jesus enjoins silence about what has happened on those who have witnessed it, only for this to have the opposite effect. This is part of the 'Messianic Secret': most likely, it expresses Mark's concern that people (then and now) should not understand Jesus' being the Son of God simply because he can work miracles. Jesus' true identity as God's Son will be revealed at the cross, when there is no further possibility of misunderstanding.

The Gentile audience reacts with enthusiasm to Jesus: this contrasts with Mark's usual presenting of the disciples as failing to understand who Jesus is and the meaning of his actions. ■

SAY

"Speak, Lord, your servant can hear and is listening."
(see 1 Samuel 3:10)

DO

Look up Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis on a map of biblical lands: this will give you an idea of where Jesus carried out his ministry.

LEARN

Tyre and Sidon are non-Jewish coastal cities to the north-west of Galilee.

Decapolis means 'Ten Cities', although there is no fixed list of these towns: it refers to an area on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan.

The important point about all these places is that they are largely Gentile.

REFLECT

Miracles in the Gospel tradition and text are described as *works of power*: they are signs of the Kingdom of God breaking through into human life and confronting sickness and death. The person in the gospel extract today is now able to communicate fully with those around him; the restrictions on his everyday relationships have been lifted.

It is a great temptation for preachers and teachers to emphasise Jesus' ability to perform such actions as revealing Jesus as the Son of God. But there is a very fine line between presenting these as

signs of the Kingdom and (inadvertently) giving the idea that Jesus could work magic, which might be the reason why neither Matthew nor Luke includes this graphically detailed story in their own gospel accounts. Mark's theme about Jesus' paradoxical insisting on not publicising accounts of healings or other experiences (the 'Messianic Secret') only makes sense in such a setting.

When we read or listen to the gospels, the evangelists want us to ask ourselves, 'What does this mean?' not 'Did it actually happen?'. That Jesus worked what we call 'miracles' is very much part

of the Gospel tradition. But miracles are symbolic of what Jesus' ministry is all about it, they are recorded as catechetical aids which show God's Kingdom breaking into situations where human beings are in need. Mark shows Jesus going beyond the confines of his own people and land and confronting suffering in those places as well as preaching the Word of God. Perhaps it might remind us that our church is called to be like the Master, who goes out to others and is not concerned simply with 'spiritual' matters, but with confronting human suffering and injustice as well. ■

SWINFORD (F12 YH57) MEELICK (F12 AY23) MIDFIELD (F12 AX29)
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TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sunday 5th **9.00am** **Meelick:** Bridget & Anthony Gallagher & dec'd Family,
Carrowreagh

Sunday 5th	10.30am	Midfield: The Kennedy, Jordan & McDonagh Families Brackloon & Kinaffe; Bernard Cunnigham; Mary & Davinet Davis Thomas Creaby, Knockbrack, Kinaffe
Sunday 12th	10.30am	Midfield: James & Delia Fraine & dec'd Family, Castlebarnagh

Congratulations and every blessing for the future to Sinéad Fadden and Ciaran Todd who celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage in Midfield church on August 27th and to Della McGrath and Thomas Geraghty who celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage in Swinford Church on August 28th.

Sacrament of Confirmation: Due to Government restrictions to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we were unable to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation with our young people in 2020 or, until now, in 2021. New Government guidelines issued on Tuesday last allow for confirmations from September 6th. Bishop Paul Dempsey will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in Swinford Church with the sixth classes of 2021 on Sunday, September 12th at 3.30 p.m. and with the sixth classes of 2020 on Sunday, September 19th at 3.30 p.m. As the capacity of the church will still be restricted, attendance at the Confirmation ceremonies will be limited to the candidates for Confirmation, their parents and sponsors. Please keep the young people who will be confirmed over the next few weeks in your prayers as they take this important step on their faith journey.

Covid update: As you may be aware, the Government issued new guidelines last Tuesday evening on emerging from restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The main change for our churches is that attendance at Masses on Sundays and weekdays is now at fifty percent of the capacity of each church. In practical terms, this means that people will be able to sit in every second seat. This new arrangement also applies to attendance at funerals but the number attending weddings is still limited to 100 for the month of September. People coming to church for Masses should continue to wear face masks and to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving the church. Thanks to all for your patience, understanding and co-operation in observing the restrictions in place until now. Thanks also to our sacristans, stewards and volunteers who clean and sanitise our churches after each Mass for their commitment to ensuring that our churches are safe for all who come to Mass. The virus remains active, of course, so we all need to continue being vigilant even with the easing of restrictions from this week.

Chrism Mass: The Chrism Mass is normally celebrated in the Cathedral on Holy Thursday morning and it is during this Mass that the Bishop blesses the Oil of Baptism and the Oil of the Sick

and consecrates the Oil of Chrism that are used in the celebration of the sacraments in the parishes of our diocese. Due to restrictions in place during Holy Week and Easter this year, it was not possible to hold the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. With the easing of restrictions, this Wednesday, September 8th, at 7.00 p.m. Bishop Paul Dempsey will celebrate the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral in Ballaghaderreen. All are welcome to attend.

Stoma Support Group meeting takes place in the Ellison Hotel, Castlebar on Thursday 9th Sept from 7 – 9pm. For more information contact 087-2300580

GAA 50/50: The club 50/50 draw was held in The Gateway Hotel and Aoibheann, Adam & Croiadh McNulty of Cloongullane, Swinford won €297.

Envelopes are available in business premises in town and online through www.swinfordgaa.ie. The next draw will be in Melletts on the 7th Sept.

The club would like to thank everyone for their support.

Swinford Community Lotto Results 30th August
Numbers: 6, 17, 24, 28; €70 Voucher Winners; Susan Nolan, Killasser; Noreen McNamarra, Belcarra; 3 Number Winners; Mikey & Rowan Durkan, Brabazon Heights; Claire Cuffe, Belcarra; David Rowley, Amenity Bld; Sheedy Girls, Collagh; Jackie McDonnell, Charlestown; Jackpot €22,200.

Swinford Golf Club 250 Centenary Draw: Draw no 20; €1000 won by Brendan Walsh Claremorris; €300 won by Philip & Caroline Irwin Swinford; €200 won by Michael Dee Swinford. Thanks for joining our draw.

Pendant Alarm: If you are aged 65 or over you are entitled to receive a pendant alarm through the SAS (Seniors Alert Scheme). Installation is free along with free monitoring for the first year. If interested in this service or for any further queries or information please contact the Kilmovee/Urlaur community alert group on 083-414 5159.

Vhi Mini Marathon: The Butterfly Garden are taking part in this year's Vhi Virtual Women's Mini Marathon - getting fit while raising much-needed funds for our community project remembering all the little lives taken too soon. Whether walking, jogging or running it for this Virtual event which takes place from 17th-19th Sept - we would love for you to join us. Get in touch with us at The Butterfly Garden on Facebook or call/message Natasha on 086 3622522 for more info.