

## **Donnybrook**

10 February 2022

### **Welcome**

You will have noticed a foreign word in today's reading – Ephphatha. There are a few of these in the Gospels: Abba, Talitha koum, Eloi eloi sabachthani, boanerges, Cephas and Ephphatha. It is a little reminder that while the Gospel were written in Greek, the language of Jesus was Aramaic, a Semitic language widely used in the Middle East at the time. Ephphatha means "be opened," as explained correctly in Mark.

### **Steps**

At a baptism, immediately after the washing with water, there are three gestures: the white garment, the baptismal candle and the Ephphatha prayer. The words of the Ephphatha prayer are beautiful. As the priest touches the ears and the mouth of the the person to be baptised, baby or adult, he prays:

The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father. Amen.

This prayer has been used since at least the seventh century. It was prayed over each one of us.

In a small catechism written many years ago, Brian Davies OP asked a simple question: where is the word of God to be found? And he gave a nuanced answer: The word of God is to be found *chiefly* in the Scriptures. Chiefly is very good because it means chiefly but not only. The word of God is also found in nature, in human love, in the inner voice of conscience, at turning points in our lives, in music and poetry, in our restlessness of heart and so on. We, as human beings, have been well described as "hearers of the word", that is, as creatures listening out for a potential word from God.

But Davies also wrote *chiefly* in the Scriptures. Pope Benedict described the Scriptures as "the very voice of the pilgrim people of God." As we listen to that voice, we recognise ourselves and we become attuned to what God is saying to us through what he said to those who went before us.

### **Conclusion**

The synodal pathway, as foreseen, is grounded in three things: prayer, discernment and the Word of God. All three are important. Each of us is called to open the word of God for prayer and discernment that we may hear what the Spirit is saying to us today. As we have had the courage to listen, may we have the courage to speak. Ephphatha.