

***Be Opened!***

When you prepare the environment for the prayer service, keep in mind that the liturgical color for Ordinary Time is green. A cross or crucifix and a large candle should be part of the environment. Prominently display a Lectionary or Bible. See the notes in the Ritual/Reflection section for other necessary materials and environment suggestions for this particular prayer service.

**Invitation to Prayer**

*Use these or similar words to offer a warm welcome to the children, adults, and families gathered to begin the session:*

**Welcome, everyone. I want to ask each of us to focus on this moment and this chance to listen to God’s word. Today’s Gospel theme is “Be Opened.” These words are meant to touch our hearts and minds today. So, together, let us fill this room with sacred silence and really listen to God’s message for us today. (Pause.)**

**Gathering Song**

*Invite all to stand and join in the Gathering Song:*

“All Are Welcome” (Haugen)

**Sign of the Cross**

*Invite all to make the Sign of the Cross:*

**In the name of the Father . . .**

**Opening Prayer**

*Lead the following prayer:*

**God of holy love,  
we know how important it is  
to be open to you  
and your presence in our lives.  
Help us trust that no matter what limitations we have,  
you will help us live as Jesus did.  
Today we ask for the ability  
to imitate the openness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God forever and ever. Amen.**

**Scripture Reading**

*Invite everyone to remain standing for the Gospel reading.*

Proclaim Mark 7:31–37.

**Faith Sharing**

*Invite all to be seated and reflect on one or more of the following questions, either silently or by talking with other children and adults nearby:*

- ◆ **When has someone you know showed you how to be open to others or to God?**
- ◆ **Who are the people in your life who think and act differently than you do? How is God asking you to hear and speak with greater openness to those whom you think are different?**

**Ritual/Reflection**

Invite the group to think about what they have heard in God’s word and their faith sharing. After a pause, and in silence, have an individual or family carry a symbol of openness and place it on a table which is covered with a green cloth. *(The symbol may be a large, unlabeled can that has been opened, a large key, a large padlock that is unlocked, or any other symbol of “openness.”)*

The symbol bearers remain at the table and the prayer leader invites the group to come forward in procession. The ones who have carried the symbol bless the ears of the first person with a Sign of the Cross and the words, “Be opened.” The first person blessed then turns and blesses the next in line. This continues until everyone has been blessed. If the group is too large, then abbreviate the ritual by inviting each person to exchange blessings with a person near him or her.

**Prayer of  
the Faithful**

*Invite all to stand for the Prayer of the Faithful:*

**Our response is: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**For leaders and members of the Church, that all may have the courage to heed the command “Ephphatha” (ef-fah-thah) and be open each day to God’s presence and grace, we pray:**

**For all whose hearts are frightened, and all who struggle with worries about family and work, that they may be opened to God’s healing presence in the people around them, we pray:**

**For each of us who are blind and deaf to those in our midst who are most vulnerable and in need, that we might be open to reaching out to them, we pray:**

*The leader may choose to invite those present to offer intentions particular to the needs of the Church, the world, and the local community.*

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*Invite all to pray the Lord’s Prayer:*

**Our Father . . .**

**Closing Prayer**

*Lead the following prayer:*

**God of openness and trust,  
we thank you for the gift of this day  
and the gift of your word  
which fills our minds and hearts.  
Give us courage when we want to run in fear  
and show us how to love when we are tempted not to care.  
Help us remain ever open to you  
so that we may see your power  
constantly at work in our lives.  
We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

**Final Blessing**

*Conclude the prayer by signing yourself with the Sign of the Cross and saying:*

**May God, who chose to send his Son to show us how to live, bless us and keep us in his care, now and forever. Amen.**

**Closing Song**

“Amazing Grace” (Traditional)