



# Graduation Ceremony Diploma Course in Safeguarding 2018 9 February 2018

Homily by Msgr. Beer, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Munich-Freising,

Mk 7,31-37

Dear sisters and brothers,

Congratulations on receiving your diploma in "Safeguarding!" You have learned a lot, invested time and energy, and now you have received it in your hands. You can be happy about this. For us believers, we bring our joy and thanksgiving before God for what has been achieved. In this sense, it is right and just to celebrate a Mass on this occasion as we are now doing. When we stand before God in this celebration of the Mass, we can cast a glance – in other words, from the perspective of an encounter with God – back onto what happened in the diploma course you completed.

To put it matter-of-fact and even a bit spiteful, you devoted yourselves to a multitude of paper that you keep at hand to read, you have probably covered many sheets of paper in notes, and at the end, you receive yet another piece of paper (namely, your diploma). So then was all of this, the whole diploma course, just a big "paper battle?" You could probably argue that you also had discussions, worked on cases, and practiced. But what was the meaning of it? Was it only about what was written and purported on the paper in order to implement, copy, follow, imitate or was it about something else that cannot be bound to paper.

So what could it be? Today's Gospel gives us an indication and hint of what it is. It is the encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, which moves, changes, and transforms our heart. It is the encounter and thereby the personal change that comes with it, which opens our mouth and ears like the deaf man with a speech impediment in today's Gospel. Being transformed by an encounter with Christ, we are able to properly perceive the complaints of the abused and of those threatened by abuse and raise our own voices for them in an authentic way.



Without this foundation, without being personally moved and transformed, everything that you have learned remains superficial and in the long term ineffective. The theological, philosophical, and other diplomas and credentials of the abusers have not helped to protect the children because mere knowledge about the Gospel clearly did not have the transformative power to change people with an official attestation about their knowledge of the heart.

The necessary encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, as seen in today's Gospel, exhibits four features that are important for the context of our gathering. First, in the Gospel it says that Jesus took the deaf man to the side. The encounter does not happen in the masses. It lives by being personally – not generally or abstractly – addressed. Empty phrases and formula that are said so simply and then automatically repeated are out of place. Second, Jesus sticks his finger in the ears and touches the tongue of the deaf-mute man. He breaks through the customary distance and detachment, and on the other side, the deaf man allows for Jesus to come very close to him. Third, Jesus looks to heaven, turns to the Father in prayer, and asks for heavenly power to change the situation of the deaf man. Fourth, Jesus demands the deaf man to open himself, practically speaking, to take action himself. Altogether it is four elements, which in today's periscope of Jesus' encounter with the deaf man, that are important: personal attention, the authorization to come near, prayer, and self-motivated activity.

From these points, we can learn how we ourselves can come to this self-transforming encounter with Jesus Christ – even in regards to our work and study for the diplomas. Pertinent to what was previously said, here are another four important points.

### Point 1

It is not enough to just learn by memorization because the knowledge will just remain abstract. When the self-motivated acquisition of knowledge and the personal responsibility towards knowledge is missing, then so too is the personal tone. Just as Jesus personally speaks to the deaf man, so also should we always be personally challenged by the good news of Jesus Christ, but also by the knowledge that we should learn.



#### Point 2

We should allow for the intimacy, in which we allow Jesus as true friend to come near to our own dark blemishes of the soul. Only in this way can the stubbornness in the weak, evil and bad be overcome and the Light of Jesus Christ brighten the darkness in ourselves. This also applies for what we learn. Studying does not only mean to hear about the other and others, but it also always means learning about oneself. Learning means to always question, "What does all of this mean to me?"

## Point 3

In prayer, we are near to Christ in a special way. When what we do – even studying – is permeated by prayer, then Jesus Christ is also there. His transformative, creative spirit can work wonders that we alone cannot achieve.

## Point 4

Self-initiated action, to take action oneself, to do it yourself, self-initiative is the goal to which all things lead. The encounter with Jesus cannot deteriorate to an insignificant afternoon coffee party, at which we ultimately say "nice to see you" and then depart without any sort of consequence. This also applies for studying. In the end, it is not the mass of knowledge that determines the success of one's study but how one applies what one independently began with this knowledge.

Dear alumni of this diploma course, I hope that you have experienced the transformative power of encounter both with our Lord Jesus Christ and with the presented knowledge in question. I hope that you will be strengthened in your will by the knowledge and expertise acquired through this program to be better listeners and speakers, and better advocates for children and youth. I very much hope that you remain in motion: that you move closer to Jesus, closer to improved protection of children and youth, and ultimately also closer to an understanding of your own person, and your own limits and possibilities, fears and chances.

If this should this happen, then the concluding words of today's Gospel will apply for each and every one of you most personally. It can be said, "He/she has done all things well. He/she makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

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To conclude, it is exactly that what makes your diploma so valuable. It is above all the proof that you, in a sense, actually exposed yourself to a personal process of change. It is the recognition that you are personally changed and further developed. Moreover it is also the marker that the transformative process of your own person and your environment, which began with this diploma course, will continue.