



Gospel Mk 1:40-45

The leprosy left him and he was cured.

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees: 'If you want to' he said 'you can cure me.' Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. 'Of course I want to!' he said. 'Be cured!' And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured. Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him, 'Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery.' The man went away, but then started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived. Even so, people from all around would come to him.

Reflection by Greg Sunter

It is hard to imagine a person in 1st Century Palestine who would be more of an outcast from society than the leper. Unfortunately, any form of skin disease was categorised as leprosy (known as Hansen's disease today). It was regarded as one of the greatest forms of uncleanness and seen as a physical manifestation of God's punishment on the person.

For a person like this to even approach Jesus is a huge risk and an enormous act of faith. He trusts that Jesus will not reject him like everybody else in his life has done. His request to Jesus is almost a demand; it is certainly filled with an utter conviction of Jesus' ability and good will: 'if you want to, you can cure me'. Jesus' reaction is one of equally strong emotion – he is so moved by this man's plight that he reaches out his hand and touches the man. To touch a person with leprosy was to break every rule of the clean/unclean social structure that dominated Jewish society. In this one action, Jesus challenges the entire basis on which Jewish society is constructed – the purity code. For Jesus to touch this man, according to the purity code, is to become unclean himself. But Jesus ignores these social rules and responds out of love and heals the man with word and action. However, Jesus knows that if the man is to be accepted back into society he needs to conform to the rules that dominate his world. He must present himself to the local priest who is the only one with the authority to declare someone cured of their disease and thus able to become ritually clean and welcome back into worship and back into everyday life.

The Living Word

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

14 February 2021

First Reading Lv 13:1-2. 44-46

As long as he is unclean, he must live alone, outside the camp.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'If a swelling or scab or shiny spot appears on a man's skin, a case of leprosy of the skin is to be suspected. The man must be taken to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests who are his sons.

'The man is leprous: he is unclean. The priest must declare him unclean; he is suffering from leprosy of the head. A man infected with leprosy must wear his clothing torn and his hair disordered; he must shield his upper lip and cry, "Unclean, unclean". As long as the disease lasts he must be unclean; and therefore he must live apart: he must live outside the camp.'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 31:1-2. 5. 11. R. v.7

(R.) I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.

- Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.
O happy the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile. (R.)

- By now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: 'I will confess my offence to the Lord.'
And you, Lord, have forgiven the guilt of my sin. (R.)
- Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!
O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart. (R.)

Second Reading 1 Cor 10:31-11:1

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Whatever you eat, whatever you drink, whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of God. Never do anything offensive to anyone – to Jew or Greeks or to the Church of God; just as I try to be helpful to everyone at all times, not anxious for my own advantage but for the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved.

Take me for your model, as I take Christ.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 7:16

Alleluia, alleluia!

A great prophet has appeared among us;

God has visited his people.

Alleluia!

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