
Sunday, February 11, 2018 – Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 | Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11 | 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 | Mark 1:40-45

GLANCING THOUGHTS

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus reaches out to touch a leper; and by touching him, Jesus heals him.

Leprosy is a disease worth fearing. It disfigures and disables a person. The ancient world thought it could be transmitted by touch. For the sake of the health of the community, the law made lepers outcasts; but, even without the law, nobody wanted to touch a leper. The leper healed by Jesus must have lived for a long time without the touch of another human being.

How welcome the touch of Jesus must have been to that leper! And how overjoyed the leper must have been when he found himself healed!

Leprosy is not the only thing that severely disfigures and disables a person. Sin does so too. And the touch of Jesus that heals leprosy heals sin as well. That is why, at Mass, we pray, “Only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.” Forego touch, Lord! We would be so overjoyed if you just said the word! Your healing would be so welcome to us!

But we say those words at every Mass, week after week, year after year. And still we struggle with our sins. Somewhere Nietzsche says unkindly about Christians, “They don’t even look like the redeemed!” That is a painful accusation, isn’t it? Why aren’t we healed, by word or by touch, as the leper was? Why do we have to keep asking for the Lord’s healing touch at every Mass?

But think about it this way: how would Nietzsche know what the redeemed look like? For that matter, how would we? Why should we think that we are in a position to see the healing that the Lord does in our lives? Why would we think that we are in a position to judge how far we have come in conquering the sin in ourselves? The Lord tells us not to judge others (Mt 7:1). Why should we think we are able to judge ourselves?

So we do not have to see the effects of the healing touch of the Lord in order for it to do its work. The touch of the Word, for whose healing word we pray at every mass, does its healing deep within. Our job is to be open to that touch.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In those days ritual demanded that if you had the sore of leprosy you had to “tear your clothes, be excluded, live apart from those you loved, and announce your presence by shouting ‘unclean’”? Are some people treated in a similar way today?
- Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” In which of your day’s activities is it easy for you to remember the presence of God? Which are hard? Can you gradually allow your actions to allow for God’s will?
- “Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him and said to him, ‘I do will it. Be made clean.’” If you come to Jesus with a problem, do you think he will be moved with pity and touch you in some healing way? Can you help heal those who are ailing around you? How can your scars help in healing others?

FROM POPE FRANCIS

Jesus saves! These healings, these words that reach the heart, are the sign and the beginning of salvation—the path of salvation for many who begin to go to hear Jesus or to ask for a healing and then turn to him and feel salvation.

Jesus has gone to the Father and from there he still intercedes, every day, at all times for us. This is something current: Jesus before the Father, offering his life, the redemption, showing the Father his wounds, the price of salvation. Every day Jesus intercedes.

When we, for one reason or another, feel a little down, let’s remember that it is he who prays for us, intercedes for us continuously

~Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, January 22, 2015

LIVING THE READINGS

- Consider how Jesus has ‘reached out’ to you in your life and in the lives of those around you. How has that changed you/them? How can you share that experience with others?
- ‘Reach out’ to the modern day lepers – while we may not heal them physically, by reaching out to those cast aside by society we are recognizing and honoring their God-given inherent dignity. Make ‘reaching out’ part of your Lenten practice and offering.

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