

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – Mark 1:40-45 – Daily Roman Missal**

A leper came to Jesus and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.” The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. He said to him, “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.” The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

## **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings**

*From a sermon by Blessed Isaac of Stella, abbot*

Why, brothers, are we so little concerned to seek one another’s well-being, so that where we see a greater need, we might show a greater readiness to help and carry one another’s burdens? For this is what the Blessed Apostle Paul urges us to do in the words, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” and also, “Support each other in charity. For this surely is the law of Christ.” Why can I not patiently bear the weaknesses I see in my brother, which either out of necessity or because of physical or moral weakness, cannot be corrected? And why can I not instead generously offer him consolation; as it is written, “Their children shall be carried on their shoulders and consoled upon their knees?” It is because I lack the virtue, which suffers all things, is patient enough to bear all, and generous enough to love? This is indeed the law of Christ, who truly bore our weaknesses in his passion and carried our sorrows out of pity, loving those he carried and carrying those he loved. Whoever attacks a brother in need or plots against him in his weakness of whatever sort, surely fulfills the devil’s law and subjects himself to it. Let us then be compassionate toward one another, loving all our brothers, bearing one another’s weaknesses, yet ridding ourselves of our sins. The more any way of life sincerely strives for the love of God and the love of our neighbor for God’s sake, the more acceptable it is to God, no matter what be its observances or external form. For charity is the reason why anything should be done or left undone, changed or left unchanged; it is the initial principle and the end to which all things should be directed. Whatever is honestly done out of love and in accordance with love can never be blameworthy. May he then deign to grant us this love, for without it we cannot please him, and without him we can do absolutely nothing, God, who lives and reigns for ever. Amen.

**Sacraments: The Work Performed – Lesson and Discussion**

*“he stretched out his hand, touched him...”*

“Often Jesus asks the sick to believe. He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands, mud and washing. The sick try to touch him, ‘for power came forth from him and healed them all.’ And so in the Sacraments, Christ continues to ‘touch’ us in order to heal us.”[1] “In order to apply to men the merits of His life and Passion, our Blessed Lord instituted seven Sacraments. These Sacraments act *ex opera operato*, provided all the conditions for their action are present; but they act in proportion to our dispositions. We must, therefore, not only receive them, but try to receive them well.”[2]

**What does *ex opera operato* mean?** *Ex opera operato* means “from the work performed”, this means that the Sacrament has grace simply because it is the work of Christ and is performed by the priest, who is in the person of Christ. The Sacraments are the works of Christ. He is working in the Sacraments, and thus the Sacraments are real and grace-filled. Sacraments are not a sign or symbol; they are the work of Christ. The work of Christ through the Sacrament cannot be lessened by the minister. In other words if the priest lacks faith or is a sinful man, the work of Christ is not lessened. **Is there anything that could make a Sacrament invalid?** Yes. All the conditions for the Sacrament’s action must be present. **What are the conditions necessary for the Sacraments?** “Every Sacrament consists of two things: matter, which is called the element, and form, which is commonly called the word.”[3] We have to have the right matter (stuff) and the right form (words).

In today’s Gospel we see that Jesus uses both matter and form as He heals the leper. His very touch is the matter, “he stretched out his hand, touched him”. The form is His words, “I do will it. Be made clean.”

**How can we allow the work of Christ, through the Sacraments, have the most impact in our life?** The work of Christ through the Sacraments will act or have an impact in proportion to our disposition. The leper is the example of the perfect disposition in which to approach, receive, and accept the Sacraments. The beauty of the Sacraments is that they are effective and grace filled for us, not because of us. There is nothing we can do to add or take away from the Sacrament, but we can through our disposition, block or inhibit the grace that is offered to us.

**What helps us to receive the Sacraments, so that we may get the most out them?[4]** To help us do this [receive the Sacraments well], the Church makes use of solemn ceremonies in administering the Sacraments. The Council of Trent thus explains the part played by these ceremonies:

1. They surround these Holy Mysteries with a religious respect.
2. They help to make the Sacraments more effective by, in some sense,

picturing them before our eyes, at the same time imprinting the holiness they produce more deeply in our hearts.

3. They excite in our souls sentiments of faith and charity, which dispose them in the best possible way to receive all the fruits of a Sacrament. All the Sacraments produce sanctifying grace, which heals our souls and raises them to a supernatural state.

**Why is it important to be respectful and reverence in the preparation and reception of the Sacraments?** As stated above our reverence and respect enables us “in the best possible way to receive all the fruits of a Sacrament.” We can ask for the Gift of the Holy Spirit called Piety. “Piety: One of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which leads on to devotion to God (1831). Filial piety connotes an attitude of reverence and respect by children toward their parents (2215). Piety also refers to the religious sense of a people, and its expression in popular devotions (1674).”[5] Holy Mother Church, just like our own earthly mothers, give us rules or disciplines, so that we can get the best or the most out of what we are given. Teachers and coaches give us rules and discipline so that we can get the most out of the instruction. The Church gives us important rules in regards to how to celebrate the Mass and the Sacraments. These rules are also called norms, rubrics, instructions, or disciplines and are contained in the liturgical books such as the Rites and Roman Missal. In these books there are black text and red text. A popular saying in the formation of priests is “do the red, say the black.” This is very similar to the script of a play that gives “stage directions” which are similar to the red and the “script” itself, which is similar to the black.

**Don’t rules and structure make things boring?** Sports have rules. Music has rules. Yet, our culture cannot get enough of either. Pretty much all TV Shows; whether they are sitcoms or reality based, follow rules, structures and patterns. For example, American Idol has the same judges, same cast of nobodies who try to sing on a show where they can win fame. They are voted off by America. NCIS, CSI, Law and Order SVU and other shows similar to them have a dead body (or bodies), they try to figure out who killed the person (or people), and bring them to justice. *Phineas and Ferb* a Disney cartoon uses the same pattern every episode. In season 3, episode 20 “Tri-Stone Area” the writers change the look of all the characters and even use a “caveman” language so that the viewer doesn’t know what is being said. Due to the constant pattern of the series, the viewer knows exactly what is going on and the episode is entertaining. In the Liturgy, we have the same pattern or template, what changes are the feasts, the readings, some prayers and the sentiments that we carry in our heart and mind. Pattern does not make things boring, we do. We must be careful though not to think of Mass as a television show where we may think, “oh, I’ve seen this episode before” and tune out. The difference is the Mass is the same one as Jesus celebrated 2,000 years ago and is not just a “recreation” or “representation” of what took place. It is the moment every time when Heaven comes down to Earth, and we kneel in awe and in thanksgiving.