

MONDAY OF THE THIRTIETH WEEK IN OT

October 26, 2020

Today's Gospel episode, found only in that of St. Luke, is not a teaching parable from the imagination of Jesus, but is an actual happening in His public ministry, an encounter in a synagogue along His steady journey towards Jerusalem and His arrest there, and then His torture, execution, resurrection and ascension -- the outcome of which is our salvation! The woman Jesus heals today is probably not that young. Luke describes her as being bent over, completely incapable of standing up straight. We are told she has been in this condition for at least 18 years. Jesus says that if the Law allows someone to give water to an animal on the Sabbath, surely a human should not be denied being cured simply because it is the Sabbath. To understand the words of Jesus we must know that for many Jews at that time any deformity or even any illness was the consequence of someone's sin -- either that of the person or a close relative -- and was in a real sense "bondage to Satan." So, any cure then was a freeing from that bondage. We see today that even if the Pharisees were unhappy at this healing and were probably humiliated by the words of Jesus to them, the crowds were all on the side of Jesus, even cheering. Hopefully, if we had been there to see this bent-over woman cured of her infirmity, we would have been cheering Jesus too and glorifying God, as we are told the woman did. Luke gives us no indication that this woman who was cured was either homeless or a beggar. In fact, we are told that she was inside a synagogue where Jesus was teaching when He noticed her and her condition. He then called her to Him, laid His hands on her and immediately her condition of deformity disappeared and she stood up straight.

We all see beggars -- panhandlers, we often term them -- even in rather affluent surroundings, and while they sometimes may appear a bit gaunt, they are rarely bent over or physically deformed. However, in my past travels to some large cities of Europe, and in Rome in particular, I was surprised at the number of beggars who had some physical deformity, including several elderly ones who exactly fit this woman's description.

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Many of them were regulars each day at the entrance of a major church. While some worshipers who entered did put coins in their outstretched hand, sadly no one could heal any of them of their condition.

Our First Reading today is from the final chapters of the Letter to the Ephesians, and on Friday we will begin the Letter to the Philippians. The author of Ephesians might well have been familiar with the incident that St. Luke recounts in today's Gospel. He echoes in his words to his readers what we see motivates Jesus to bring about in the synagogue setting. We are urged to be: **KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, COMPASSIONATE AND FORGIVING.** Furthermore, we are told to be: **IMITATORS OF GOD, AS BELOVED CHILDREN, AND TO LIVE IN LOVE, AS CHRIST LOVED US AND HANDED HIMSELF OVER FOR US AS A SACRIFICIAL OFFERING.**

Some may have noticed how frequent in those letters actually penned by St. Paul or just attributed to him are warnings about the dangers of sinful sexual behaviors, which historians tell us were quite rampant, common and diverse in the culture and times Paul lived in. We are warned today several times in no uncertain words: **NO IMMORAL OR IMPURE OR GREEDY PERSON HAS ANY INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF GOD.**

Finally, today's passage ends with this direct, but very reassuring, command: **NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD. LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT!**