

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on February 15, 2009
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year B

As a child, when I was sick, I can remember my mother saying to me, "If I could take this from you, I would." My mother suffered from psoriasis. It was very embarrassing for her. She would always keep herself covered. She never went swimming – except on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption. There is an old Irish tradition that Our Lady puts a cure in the waters on that day, but her psoriasis persisted. I remember thinking, "If I could, I would take it from her." But this is impossible for anyone.

Except for Christ, who meets a leper in today's Gospel. What the leper is suffering is not necessarily Hansen's Disease, leprosy as we know it today – it could be psoriasis. Jesus' response is immediate and heroic – He touched him – declared him clean – healed him. Then Jesus said, "Tell no one – do what the law requires." Jesus not only cured the man; He integrated him back into the community.

This healing comes at a cost. Jesus lives on the fringe. He is not interested in shallow glory, not a flash in the pan. He is interested in faith and the glorification of God. St. Irenaeus says, "The glory of God is the human person fully alive." That is what Jesus is interested in – not just good, but godly people of faith.

Christ is doing the same today. We are living in the time of the Paschal Mystery, the time of the dying and rising of Christ. This is time for a holy exchange, an exchange of our old self for a new self. Christ can do this in us. He takes the worst in us and gives us the best in Him.

Lent is coming. There is one young man among us who is preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. There are several people preparing for Confirmation. We also need to be preparing ourselves. We can use this as a time simply for "doing things" – or – as a time for letting go of my old self and growing in Christ as my new self.

This happens in our ARISE faith sharing groups. This happens in the catechumenate with those preparing to receive the sacraments. It happens in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. And it happens most vividly in the Eucharist when we can become what we receive. In the Eucharist, Christ says, "This is My Body and My Blood." In the Eucharist, Christ is saying, "Do this...become Me."