

### Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (8/30/20)

Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem when he was struck with what must have been a difficult sight. Ten lepers. This dread disease was a scourge - the individual was physically deformed, had foul smelling wounds, was an outcast, like one among the walking dead. However, for some there was a chance to be healed - and some were healed. The Jewish law prescribed that for those who seemed to be healed they must be certified "clean" in order to rejoin the assembly, they must be officially declared by the priests to have had their blot removed. Only after this declaration from the priests could their union to the body of the assembly be restored.

These ten approach Jesus and plead for mercy. Notice that they do not ask to be healed. Were they asking the mercy of his healing touch that had been so well known all over the land? Did they expect that through his intercession God would hear his plea and work a supernatural cure - as Miriam was healed of her leprosy at the pleading of Moses during the journey in the desert? Or perhaps they simply saw their condition as irreversible and a death sentence - one in which they spent the rest of their days ignored, unwanted, and rejected - and were simply asking him to notice them and acknowledge them as human. Regardless of their expectations, our Lord opts for the most powerful of the options and heals them. He does not simply acknowledge them (although he did acknowledge), did not just intercede alone (although his very act is the result of an immediate connection to the Divine Godhead) - but he set them on their way and performed the act after they had left. Notice that the healing was not immediate, but it occurred as they went away and followed his instructions.

How often do we expect Jesus to do something miraculous for us; how often do we plead and expect in our loneliness to be simply noticed by the Lord; how often do we come to him broken, beaten, rejected, hopeless and simply plead for mercy? Just like the lepers we approach unclean and in need of his healing. His mercy allows the stain to be removed, the rejection to be wiped away, the reunion to the body to be achieved. With the lepers, Jesus sent them to the priests to ratify the cleansing he was to do. We can see in this a scriptural support for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Just as the individual was not able to rejoin the community without the ministry of the priests, just as the intercession of Moses was required for Miriam to be cleansed, so Our

Lord decided that our cleansing and restoration is achieved through the ministry the Church and at the hands of His priests. The two-fold action of intercession and authority he gave to the Apostles is exercised through that ministry, and the blot of sin is removed and the event is certified by the official action of the priest. So when we feel that disconnection, we we sense the separation from the Body of Christ and from the friendship with God that has occurred because of our sin we too should follow the example of the lepers and go to Jesus. We should know that he does not reject, and we should come to him in faithful expectation of receiving his love and mercy. Then we must follow the direction of Jesus and approach confession and, offer the sacrifice that is prescribed. In the past this was a sacrifice in the temple, now it is achieved through the penance. Note that Jesus sent these lepers in the same direction as he was heading. The priests were in Jerusalem (where Our Lord was heading). After one entry to that city, he will celebrate the Last Supper with his disciples. An action in the sharing of His Body and Blood that the faithful will receive after that time (and to our time) from the hands of the Apostles. These lepers, now cleansed, and if they followed his instructions, reunited to the worshipping Body of the Jewish people. Our following his instructions allows us to be reunited once again to his Body and able to partake of that same meal - once cleansed of sin in confession, we can share in his banquet here at the altar participating in the Eucharist worthily, with genuine spiritual effect.

There is another important element that we must mention. That of gratitude. Only one of the ten comes back to thank Jesus, only one makes the effort, only one shows that he has allowed Jesus' mercy to profoundly impact him. He is so moved by the gift he has receive and the love shown, that he travels some miles to find Jesus to thank him. The healing mercy of Jesus, and the reception of the Eucharist should move us to a profound thankfulness too. The reception of so great a gift, should move us with a deep sense of gratitude and love. This gratitude is like that of the one who returned, making the effort to give thanks to the one who showed him mercy when everyone else shunned him. Let us remember the one who in our deepest dark times, in our most confused and despairing, in our rejection by those who are closest to us, holds out the hand of mercy to us and draws us lovingly into the great mystery of God's redemption of humanity. What a great gift, let us joyfully participate in these mysteries today remembering to give thanks to God who is our healing, our strong support, and our salvation.