

## **Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time February 14 2021**

If it had not been for the snow today, you would be listening to Archbishop Etienne tonight. By the way, he gave a great retreat on the Year of Eucharist today via zoom. I spoke with my mom who viewed the retreat and I said to her, "Well, I better get off the phone because I need to pull a homily together for tonight. She gave me advice that only a mother can give: "Keep it short and everyone will be happy."

So here it goes a homily according to my Mom's advice!

Both in the book of Leviticus and the Gospel of Mark, we see the people of God struggling with what the scripture calls leprosy. It really is not so important what kind of skin disease the people has what it meant for them and their role in the community. We hear very clearly the if someone has a scab, pustule or blotch that appears to be leprosy he shall go to one of the high priests and if he is unclean then the priest will declare him so and he will be isolated from everyone else. The real pain of the disease is not so much physical as it is emotional and spiritual.

Isolation is something that we all know in our lives. The brief isolation that comes from a snowstorm can be a welcome relief. Especially for kids when school is cancelled for a few days, or for adults with our all-too busy lives come to a halt and allow us to have a surprise rest bit. However, those feelings might seem to be something that was a part of our past instead of our present reality. The pandemic has created for many people a sense of isolation.

Isolation can create feelings of anxiety. Anxiety can lead us to grasp for control, which can lead us to greater division. The deeper the division, the more likely take offense and we are to accuse one another rather

than trying to understand one another. Pope Francis reminds that one of the titles for the Devil is “The Great Accuser.”

Jesus accepts the leper as he comes to him. The leper broke the social taboos of the time and even religious law by kneeling down close to Jesus and begging him to make him clean. The real cleansing is when Jesus restores the leper to the community.

We actively participate in the restorative ministry of Jesus whenever we decide not to be easily offended by someone who does not agree with us, when we avoid accusing the other of wrong in a way that leads to further division, and to allow for a new way of thinking that transcends division, that avoids polarizations and speaks to others who differ from us with a spirit of respectful dialogue. Archbishop Etienne spoke of this today with the tension that some feel over the question of which is the more reverent gesture, to receive communion in the hand or on the tongue. He said that we need to be willing to live with the tension Jesus is both divine and human. If one focuses mostly on his divinity, that person might be less inclined to receive in the hand, if one focuses more on the human of Jesus, one might be more inclined to receive in the hand. Neither is wrong, both are right.

Mom, if you are watching, was that short enough? I will end with this, even in conflict keep your heart set on Jesus and how he restores us to active participation into the life of the community.