

2021 February 14

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading:

First: Leviticus 13.1-2, 45-46 "Anyone who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes." (45)

The Psalm: 32 "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven." (1)

Second: 1 Corinthians 10.31-11.1 "Do everything for the glory of God." (31)

The Gospel: Mark 1.40,45 "I do choose. Be made clean." (41b)

God of all Nations and Races

We are already in the season of dryness, aridity, and loneliness. In most books of the Old Testament sickness is seen as God's punishment. They had to wait for Jesus to rewrite that script and bring humaneness to the sick, suffering and the downtrodden. In the Levitical law of the Israelites it was mandatory to expel the lepers to isolation and banish them from social contacts. For the lepers and those similarly isolated, if they care, the only consolation and recourse were the words of the psalmist, "*You surround me with glad cries of deliverance.*" (Psalm 32.7.b)

These aspirations and prayers of the suffering was answered by Jesus when he met the lepers and others with physical, mental, and spiritual suffering. The leper resonate the words of the psalmist. He tells Jesus, "*If you choose, you can make me clean.*" (Mark 3.40) He took courage to break a barrier that was put before him by the society, being fully aware of the consequences if caught up by the authorities. He violated the rule of isolation imposed on him. Jesus was aware of this law, but discarded it, and himself violated the prohibition on him by stretching out his hand and touching the unclean leper, by which he was supposed to become unclean. He did it because he knew that it was time for these laws to go, and for the new law of love had to replace the old law.

The wish and prayer of the leper was more than enough for Jesus to make him clean and to liberate him from the fetters of the law and social isolation. Even against the strict orders of Jesus the healed leper goes around the towns and villages to acclaim the blessing showered on him by Jesus. His joyous praise and proclamation made it difficult for Jesus to be out in the open. The whole population of the surrounding places came out to Jesus and almost suffocated him, of course, a joyful experience for Jesus. More than that, the people had the feeling of the coming of the Messianic times.

Every year we the believers enter into a period of hibernation, recouping, and rejuvenation. We try to get back into intimacy with the Lord. We do it first by trying to enter into our own self, take stock of our lives, and reconnect with our own self, with our sisters and brothers, and with our God. We try to revisit the wonders God has been doing with us and with our lives. We remind ourselves about the need for being connected, for being together and united. All these are our orientation and work during the season of Lent, to which we are preparing ourselves to enter. Today's biblical lessons helps us to change our mindset, a mindset of isolation, discrimination and segregation on the basis of sickness, ethnicity, caste, creed, colour, sexual orientation, etc. In Lent we try to come closer to Jesus, to know Jesus deeply, and to enter into his mindset. His healing of the leper helps us to peep into the personality and mindset of Jesus, which is the Lenten prescription for us. Take, and get well!

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

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