

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 11, 2018 – Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule or blotch which appears to be the sore of leprosy, he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his descendants. If the man is leprous and unclean, the priest shall declare him unclean by reason of the sore on his head.

"The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his garments rent and his head bare, and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!' As long as the sore is on him he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp."

Psalm: Ps 32:1-2, 5, 11

R. (7) I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.

Blessed is he whose fault is taken away,
whose sin is covered.

Blessed the man to whom the LORD imputes not
guilt,
in whose spirit there is no guile.

R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you
fill me with the joy of salvation.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
my guilt I covered not.
I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD,"
and you took away the guilt of my sin.

R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you
fill me with the joy of salvation.

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just;
exult, all you upright of heart.

R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you
fill me with the joy of salvation.

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 10:31-11:1

Brothers and sisters, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once.

He said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Do the spiritual life and the liturgical year coincide? Yes, but in what way? In the following I do not mean to leave aside the most crucial elements of liturgy: Ritual, Symbol, Sacrament, Community, Communion, Real presence, The body of Christ. Through all these we grow to know him “more clearly, love him more dearly, follow him more nearly” (Richard of Chichester). But the purpose of the reflections I write each week is to underline the deep spirituality of the readings we hear each Sunday. So it makes sense to look for a spiritual connection with this week’s scripture. I will make a general remark about Sunday readings and then apply it to the ones from this Sunday.

The Sunday Gospel readings are told by Mark this year (last year by Matthew). Mark is direct and uses fewer words. He always helps us get the texture of the story, to listen with our imaginations, and to let Jesus’ life enter in. He has many concrete details. For instance, last week Jesus did not just “cure” Peter’s mother-in-law, he “grasped her hand, and helped her up.” And when Jesus stills the storm at sea, he is not just “in the boat,” but, according to Mark he is “at the stern” of it. And he is not just asleep, but sleeping “on a cushion”! Imagination can happen especially if you or I take some time before we get to Sunday Mass (perhaps using the present website!) to understand and pray the readings!

Alright, what about Mark’s Gospel this Sunday? A man walks up to Jesus covered with scales and scabs. According to prescriptions (found in our First Reading) the man should “dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp.” Thus, as long as the sores are on him he should ring a bell and cry “Unclean, unclean!” In approaching Jesus in the manner he does, the man is committing a terrible social blunder and he may be breaking the law too! In the face of all this, Jesus is not repulsed or shocked, he is “moved with pity.” Just three words, but they tell us so much. Then a wonderful statement from the leper. “If you want to, you can make me clean.” What? Of course our savior wants to! Yet these words are a confession of faith on the part of the leper. Where did he get this trust of Jesus? Maybe his spiritual life had already begun. Jesus’ remarkable answer: “I do want to.”

Direct, honest, so revealing of God. The whole life of Jesus consists of a desire to give to people who are in trouble and who believe, even if they have only a small faith by which to receive, as well as large wounds. In an extraordinary move, Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the man. As noted, the ancients thought that Leprosy was communicable, and at the very least disgusting. But Jesus touched him with care and said, “Be made clean.” Our spiritual life consists of being “made clean,” no matter how disgusting our failings may be. We must receive Jesus’ touch, especially his touch upon our souls. So, here in the very first chapter of Mark, we find Jesus extending his mercy toward the leper and toward each of us. Spirituality and the Gospel have coincided. Look for more of the same as we make our way through Mark’s Gospel.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Compare and contrast the way lepers were treated in Leviticus (First Reading) with the way Jesus treated them (Gospel).
2. Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” In which of your day’s activities is it easy for you to remember the presence of God? Which are hard? Can you gradually allow your actions to allow for God’s will?
3. ““Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him and said to him, ‘I do will it. Be made clean.’” If you come to Jesus with a problem, do you think he will be moved with pity and touch you in some healing way? Can you help heal those who are ailing around you? How can your scars help in healing others?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen