

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Homily

Our human life is affected with various problems. One of them is sickness. Sickness affects our whole life and relationship. It not only affects us physically but also psychologically, socially and mentally. Some sickness distance us from people. For example, one of the more distressing impacts of the Coronavirus for us has been the experience of social isolation to protect us from contagion even when that meant to be away from our own dear ones. We wear mask, we keep social distance, we work from home or remained closed at our own households etc. Any one of us can experience a sense of isolation from time to time. We may feel isolated even though we are surrounded by people, friends and family. Separated from rest of society, those in isolation suffer not only from their illness and its terrors, but also from the isolation.

In the ancient world, leprosy was a dreadful, incurable and the most isolating of all diseases. The Jewish laws regarding leprosy are clearly outlined in the first reading of today. The lepers were ostracized by their families and neighbors to live away from the community because of the fear of contagion. If for some reason, the leper drew near to people, he had to announce his coming, shouting, 'Unclean, unclean', so people could move away from them as quickly as possible. Anyone who came into any contact whatsoever with a leper was considered to be unclean like the leper. They were dependent upon the charity of others for the necessities of life. They were referred to as the Living Dead. They were the most miserable outcast in Jewish society. They were seen as sinners who are punished by God.

But in the Gospel, we see a different picture of a leper. As we read in today's responsorial Psalm, "I turn to you Lord in time of trouble and you fill me with the joy of salvation" the leper goes to Jesus in his misery, falls to his knees with humility, and pleads with Jesus with trust to cure him. Instead of shouting "Unclean, unclean" he says to Jesus, "If it is your will you can make me clean". The leper does not doubt Jesus' ability to heal him. His only doubt is whether Jesus wanted to cure him. That's why he says, 'if you wish, you can make me clean'. Jesus did not move away at the sight of the leper, but he was moved with compassion towards the leper. He spoke to him, touched him and healed him saying "I do will it, Be made clean". By doing this Jesus not only broke the Jewish law but also broke the barriers that kept the leper isolated. He was not worried about it was contagious to touch the leper. He identified himself with the man's condition in the total rejection and isolation. In touching him, he enabled the leper to be in touch with others. Jesus did not see a leper at all; he saw a human soul in desperate need. In touching the leper, Jesus reveals that God does not exclude anyone. He wants to make contact with us in all our brokenness. He wants to touch the lives of all in a healing and life-giving way. He does not distance Himself from us. Jesus reveals that God is always ready to approach us, regardless of how we might see ourselves, or how others might see us. We are also spiritually sick. We are sick with leprosy of our sins. We all need healing, the touch of Jesus. God continues his healing work in and through the church and the sacraments. Jesus also wants us to be instruments of His mercy and healing for those who need it. As the leper who was unclean and impure became 'apostle' after his healing, we too should experience God's healing mercy in our brokenness and misery and proclaim it with joy to others so that they may also come to the Lord. Amen.