

14 FEBRUARY 2021

Sunday Message

6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 2



Fresco in the Baptistry of Parma, Italy of Jesus healing the ten lepers

In the Gospel tradition, there is one example of Jesus healing someone who is suffering from the condition known as leprosy.

The term covered a wide range of skin complaints from the wasting disease of that name to the relatively harmless (though unfortunate) condition of eczema. People with that illness found themselves excluded from normal life in society as others regarded them as a danger because of the infectious nature of their ailment. Illness was also often regarded as a punishment for sin, so such individuals were consigned to a kind of “living death”, and to be cured of leprosy was seen as equivalent to being raised from the dead: it required God to act.

It is against this background that we might understand the story in today’s Gospel. The afflicted person’s request is a statement from Mark about Jesus’ identity: the expression “if you want to” really means “if you have the power”. The human aspect of Jesus is brought to the fore when he is shown as being deeply moved and physically touching the infected one in front of him, thus technically contracting the condition of ritual uncleanness himself. By doing so, Jesus does away with the barrier between what is holy and what is not. Jesus observes the teaching of the Holiness Code of the book of Leviticus by telling the cured person to fulfil the prescriptions of the Law. He imposes silence on him at the same time, an instruction which the man immediately disregards: we will find this pattern frequently in Mark’s narrative. ■

REFLECT

There are some interesting paradoxes in today’s Gospel episode. Mark implies that Jesus has divine power in that he can cure the person suffering from leprosy, but then tells us that Jesus is moved to the depths of his being by feeling compassion for him. Jesus tells the man to observe the stipulations of the Law of Moses, but he himself has no compunction in setting aside the strict rules in the same Law about avoiding contact with a person suffering from leprosy, to the extent of touching him with his hand. Jesus gives the healed man an instruction not to talk about what has happened, an order which he cheerfully ignores and so Jesus’ fame rapidly spreads.

We find in this story the tension between the Law and the good of the individual person, which the evangelists often present through incidents which take place on the sabbath. Jesus sees the need of the person in front of him and responds to that, rather than simply imposing the letter of the Law. The purpose of the Law was to help people live close to God, but it could become a barrier, if people regarded it as an end in itself.

The Gospel presents us with standards which apply to the Church today. If we are overly concerned with the letter of the Law, we are in danger of forgetting what the Church is all about, namely to enable Jesus to touch people’s lives. ■

SAY

Lord, we come to you seeking wholeness.

(Carey Landry)

LEARN

The term “leprosy” covered all sorts of skin ailments, even less serious, non-infectious types.

The person suffering from leprosy was not only physically affected, but socially excluded from normal contact with others: they endured a kind of “living death”.

The stories of Jesus healing physical illness are illustrations of the deeper healing of the whole person.

DO

There are organisations which help children who suffer from disfiguring ailments which prevent them from living a full, social life, just like the person suffering from leprosy in our Gospel reading. Consider sending a donation to support them.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Be my protector, O God,
a mighty stronghold to save me.
For you are my rock, my stronghold!
Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your
name.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

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.

FIRST READING Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

A reading from the book of Leviticus.
The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "If a
swelling or scab or shiny spot appears on a
man's skin, a case of leprosy of the skin is
to be suspected. The man must be taken to
Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests who
are his sons.

"The man is leprous: he is unclean. The
priest must declare him unclean; he is
suffering from leprosy of the head. A man
infected with leprosy must wear his clothing
torn and his hair disordered; he must shield
his upper lip and cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' As
long as the disease lasts he must be unclean;
and therefore he must live apart; he must live
outside the camp."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 31

Response:
You are my refuge, O Lord;
You fill me with the joy of salvation.

- Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.
O happy the man to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile. (R.)

- But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: "I will confess
my offence to the Lord."
And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin. (R.)
- Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!
O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

Whatever you eat, whatever you drink,
whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of
God. Never do anything offensive to anyone
– to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God;
just as I try to be helpful to everyone at all
times, not anxious for my own advantage but
for the advantage of everybody else, so that
they may be saved.

Take me for your model, as I take Christ.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our mind,
so that we can see what hope his call holds
for us.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:40-45

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his
knees: "If you want to" he said "you can cure
me." Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched
out his hand and touched him. "Of course
I want to!" he said. "Be cured!" And the
leprosy left him at once and he was cured.
Jesus immediately sent him away and
sternly ordered him, "Mind you say nothing
to anyone, but go and show yourself to the
priest, and make the offering for your healing
prescribed by Moses as evidence of your
recovery." The man went away, but then
started talking about it freely and telling the
story everywhere, so that Jesus could no
longer go openly into any town, but had to
stay outside in places where nobody lived.
Even so, people from all around would come
to him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation, O Lord, we pray,
cleanse and renew us
and may it become for those who do your will
the source of eternal reward.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

They ate and had their fill,
and what they craved the Lord gave them;
they were not disappointed in what they
craved.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having fed upon these heavenly delights,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may always long
for that food by which we truly live.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Do not grieve over temptations you suffer.
When the Lord intends to bestow a particular
virtue on us, He often permits us first to be
tempted by the opposite vice. Therefore, look
upon every temptation as an invitation to
grow in a particular virtue and promise God
that you will be successful, if only you stand
fast.

St Philip Neri

