

## Homily of Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45

The Book of Leviticus is so called because it deals with concerns of priests. At that time, priests were of the tribe of Levi. The book deals with ritual and spiritual rules and regulations. The first reading is about some regulations concerning the disease of leprosy and the responsibility of priests. It was the responsibility of the priest to declare a person leprous and unclean. Anyone declared leprous by the priest “shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp.” The leprous “shall keep his garment rent and head bare, and muffle his beard;” and shout “unclean, unclean” should he come by people (Leviticus 13:44-46). By so doing, the leprous alerted the people to give way so as not to be made ‘unclean.’ Leviticus 5:3 instructs, “If someone, without being aware of it, touches some human uncleanness, whatever kind of uncleanness this may be, and then subsequently becomes [unclean].”

Leprosy was a dangerous disease. It mercilessly chops off part of the body; toes, fingers, ears’ blades, lips, eyelashes, and so on. It hardens the parts of the body it affects in such a way that it renders medication ineffective. No wonder it was a dreaded disease among the Jews, as we see in the first reading. But in the gospel of today, Jesus treated the leper differently. We read, “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.” People during the time of Jesus were amazed at him and said, “A new teaching with Authority” (Mark 1:27). We are all spiritually leprous. Our sins spiritually deformed and disfigured us. Our sins sometimes harden our hearts that the word of God is unable to penetrate us. We are all unclean. But Jesus treats us with pity. We need to learn from the leper and come to Jesus. He will touch us, forgive us, and heal us. Let us bring to Jesus all our illnesses and afflictions. May Jesus be moved with pity, touch and make us whole. Amen.

We pray with this song:

***Touch me one more time, O Lord;  
Touch me one more time, O Lord;  
I need the forgiving touch of the Master;  
I need the forgiving touch of the Lord;  
Touch me one more time, O Lord.***

***Touch me one more time, O Lord;  
Touch me one more time, O Lord;  
I need the healing touch of the Master;  
I need the healing touch of the Lord;  
Touch me one more time, O Lord.***

It was the priest that declared a leprous unclean (Leviticus 13:8); and it was the priest that declared a person clean when the person was healed from leprosy (Leviticus 13:17). In the gospel reading of today, Jesus said to the man he healed from leprosy, “... go, show yourself to the priest ...” (Mark 1:44). These passages are not mere coincidence. The passages are some of the biblical foundations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We show ourselves to the priest at the Sacrament of Reconciliation in humble obedience to Jesus. And the priest, in the name and authority of Jesus and the Church, declares us ‘clean.’

On our own part, are there people we treat as if they are lepers? Are there people we despise, ostracize, exclude, and discriminate against? Are there people we label ‘unclean’ and avoid them? We cannot be desiring to be close to God while we resentfully distance ourselves from fellow human beings. We cannot be praying to God and asking for forgiveness and healing while we refuse to do the same to fellow human beings. Jesus says in Luke 6:38, “For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” We are challenged, today, not to belittle anyone, or treat anyone as if the person is inferior and worthless. St. Paul advises us in the second reading, “Avoid giving offense, whether Jew or Greek or the Church of God” (1Corinthians 10:32). Jesus sets an example for us to imitate.

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