

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

Leprosy is a dangerous disease. It mercilessly eats off part of the body; toes, fingers, ears blades, lips, eyelashes. It hardens the parts of the body it affects in such a way that it renders medication ineffective. The disease is also infectious. For this reason, any who suffered leprosy was expelled from the community. The person was declared unclean by the priest. Should the person for any reason be passing by the community the person shouted, 'unclean, unclean' so that everyone moved out of his or her way.

We compared the way lepers were treated in the Old Testament and even in our time to the way Jesus treated the leper. 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).

The lepers among us are parishioners and those who need our presence or our assistance, as the case may be. By not assisting, by not visiting, by not calling, we have declared them unclean.

The lepers among us are the 'dreamers' whose future is hung on the wall. If the wall is allowed to be built, then the 'dreamers' will be allowed to stay. Is this the way of Jesus? Jesus who stretched his hand and touched the leper, what do you think he would say about this?

The 'unclean' among us are those from certain parts of the world who are disparaged as not as good as those from other parts of the world. Yet, it is the same God who created us all. Is this the way of Jesus?

The 'unclean' among us are the neglected neighborhoods, the neglected public schools, the neglected projects that are supposed to serve the less privileged.

There are many other ways by which we declare other people 'unclean' and declare ourselves 'clean,' like looking down on people, talking down on people, not being inclusive, feeling and showing superiority, denying people their rights and privileges on the bases of color or race or gender or status. All kinds of segregation and discrimination, no matter at what level, are ways we declare people 'unclean.'

Jesus stretched his hand and touched him and sickness left the man, and the man was healed. There is healing power in reaching out. Jesus tells us today to turn from the old way of rejecting, discriminating and segregating to new way of inclusiveness, compassion, and healing.

I mentioned at the beginning of this reflection that leprosy disfigures and harms the body. We have issues that are disfiguring and harming us, the parish, our families, or business, or life. We bring those issues to Jesus in prayer. We are the leper in the Gospel reading. We have come to him in this Eucharistic celebration, kneeling and begging, and saying, "Jesus, make us whole again." "Jesus, stretch your hand as you did for the leper, touch me and heal me." "Jesus, be moved with pity one more time." "Jesus, let me hear you say, 'I do will it. Be made clean.'" Amen.

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