

Read

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1

Mark 1:40-45

LIVING THE WORD

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 14, 2021



REFLECTION

Leprosy wasn't just a disgusting skin disease; it was so highly contagious (and at the time, incurable) that along with suffering the physical ailment, the person was destined to social isolation and considered such an "unclean" sinner that they could spiritually contaminate others. Did you notice that the leper in today's Gospel doesn't ask for physical healing? Of course, that was needed, but pay attention to what the leper focuses on. Coming to Jesus on his knees, begging with humility, the leper opens by acknowledging and trusting in Jesus' power: "If you wish, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40). Instead of "cure me," the leper asks Jesus, "cleanse me." While the two go together, it's significant that the leper prioritized spiritual healing and wholeness. With compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him, immediately cured the leprosy, and cleansed him from being a social and spiritual outcast.



ACTION

Who would be considered an outcast in your day-to-day life? Following Christ in word and deed means we must be willing to reach out to and include those who feel isolated. Regardless of the reason why, regardless of the social consequences it may mean for you, Christian discipleship calls you to have compassion and reach out to those on the margins. Offer company to the person who sits alone at lunch. Offer to work with the difficult person who no one wants to partner with. Make eye contact with and recognize the humanity of the homeless person on the street. Visit the elderly person who has no friends or family.



Learn about St. Damien of Molokai, who ministered to a leper colony in Hawaii:
http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/2009/ns_lit_doc_20091011_de-veuster_en.html

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How will you respond to those considered outcasts in your day-to-day life?
- ❖ Given the opportunity, if you have ever felt like an outcast, what would you ask of God?



February 14, 2021

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #77B

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Mark 1:40-45

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In ancient Israel, leprosy was a devastating diagnosis that led to a sick person experiencing ostracization and rejection from the mainstream community. People with this disease would no longer be allowed near family and friends, nor would they be allowed to participate in the religious life of Israel. Jesus did not fear those considered ritually unclean, and instead reached out to touch and heal them. He restored them to life in the community and health. We know that Jesus restores us to life and cares for us when we are feeling isolated and in need of his loving compassion.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus' healing miracles are whole and complete restoration.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today is the last Sunday in Ordinary Time in winter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday of this week. We will return to Ordinary Time after Lent and Easter Time. Many people are curious about how the Church calculates the date to celebrate Easter. The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) enacted a standard calculation for all diocese to use to calculate Easter's date each year. Each year, Easter shall be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon that occurs after the spring equinox. The date of Easter then determines the date of Ash Wednesday; to calculate Ash Wednesday's date, a person can count back six

Sundays from Easter (the length of Lent), and Ash Wednesday is the Wednesday before that day.

Church Teaching Connection

God desires for us to earnestly pray to him. He asks that we fearlessly approach him with our needs, and wants to help us in our time of need. When Jesus walked on Earth, people approached him, begging for his healing; they approached him because they believed he could heal them. God responds to the needs of his children out of love for them (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2610).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 1:40-45

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

The leper in today's reading suffered terribly. Leprosy is a disease in which a person loses sensation in his or her skin. He can't feel cuts, burns or scrapes, and doesn't draw away from what most people would find to be unpleasant sensation. They grow weak and have discolored skin. Today we have antibiotics for this disease; in Jesus' time lepers were forced to stay away from the healthy population to prevent the spread of the dreaded disease. Lepers were prevented from seeing their families and were unable to live normal lives. Their sad existence was one of exclusion and loneliness.

► **Have you ever been sick with a contagious illness (things like the flu or a cold)? How did it feel to have to stay away from people so that they wouldn't get sick, too?**

In the Gospel, Jesus never did shy away from the ugliness that is illness and disease. Instead, Jesus faced it straight on, never shrugging off or minimizing human suffering. When Jesus healed the leper, he gave the man more than a whole and healed body; he gave the man the life that he had lost to illness. In addition to healing, the man regained a normal social and religious life. He could see his family. He could go to worship God with other people. Jesus rescued his body, but also rescued every aspect of his life. The leper was truly made whole by Jesus' healing action.

► **How did you feel when you recovered from your illness? When you could visit your friends again and do your normal activities?**

Jesus was moved to compassion by the things that others might shun—illness, sorrow, doubt, and fear. He reacted to them empathetically, understanding the pain of each person he encountered. Jesus did not concern himself with becoming ill by touching the man with leprosy, indeed, he reached out and touched the man with his hand, and told the man was made clean. Jesus also instructed the man to follow the law of Moses so that he might be declared clean by the priest. This would have allowed the man to reenter society after being banished from it because of his illness. This measure both respected the law of Moses and offered the man readmission to the Jewish community.

► **When has God offered you compassion and love? How did this make you feel?**

This Gospel passage is a great witness for us about how God can break down the barriers created by human society, sickness, and even death. God's love, demonstrated by Jesus' compassion and healing, overcomes all of these things. The man with leprosy shows great faith. There was no cure for leprosy, yet he knew that Jesus could heal him. We too might feel as there is no resolution to a situation we are facing, yet if we reach out to God in faith, we know that he can help us through it.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 132.

Jesus cured the man with leprosy; the man had faith in Jesus and knew the Lord could heal him.

Leprosy was a disease that rendered the patient ritually unclean. When Jesus healed the man, he gave him back his life, livelihood, and religious acceptance.

Jesus uniquely understands human pain and suffering.

Act on the Word

Caring for the Marginalized

Plan for some reflection and discussion about today's reading. Describe leprosy's effect on people in ancient Israel. Start by explaining that the disease is a bacterial illness, and that no cure existed for it until the modern era. When people were diagnosed with the disease, the infected persons had to separate themselves from the rest of healthy or "clean" society. The infected people were considered unclean, and unfit for contact with the ritually clean people. This was a measure of infection control because leprosy is contagious, but regardless of intent, a leprosy label sentenced a sick person to a life on the fringes of society. He or she lost all family and community contact and could not participate in religious activity.

Have the young people break into small groups to consider why particular groups or individuals are marginalized today. The young people may want to search recent headlines to find marginalized groups or they may know of some in their own communities. Some topics include divorced individuals, those with mental illness, the homeless, the immigrant population, race, religion, HIV/AIDS, the sick and dying. Use the following questions to guide the discussions:

- ✧ Why does a majority group grow to fear a minority group?
- ✧ How do divisions happen in society?
- ✧ What role does fear play in social issues?

- ✧ How do others' perceptions of us sometimes influences our decisions and behaviors?
- ✧ Why do some groups feel superior to other groups?
- ✧ What role does mockery play in social division?

Have the young people come together as a large group again to share their insights with one another. If time permits, discuss ways that this might be happening in their schools or activities and what they can do to change hearts.

Closing Prayer

*Lord of all kindness,
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
healed the leper and restored him to relationship
with others.*

*Turn our attention to those in our midst in most
need of your healing,
and give us the desire to make them one
with us again.*

*May this world know the power of your
gentle care.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.