



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 12th February 2012 - The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 12th February 2012 (Mark 1:40-45): Jesus Heals a Leper

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.

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

Mark shows the warmth of Jesus' humanity with his concern for a leper. The leper had no right even to approach Jesus, but must have felt that he would get a favourable response and no word of reproach. "Jesus felt sorry for him" is rather a weak translation - the Greek is far stronger: colloquially it literally means 'was gutted'; so Jesus felt compassion to the depths of his being. Then Jesus touched him - in this touching he was both reaching out to someone ritually impure and risking infection. There have been famous repetitions of this brave and heartfelt gesture: Francis of Assisi kissing a leper's hand, Princess Diana shaking hands with an AIDS sufferer (when the sickness was thought to be contagious by touch). One can imagine the awestruck horror of the bystanders at this outrageous expression of love and sympathy. Why, then, does Jesus 'sternly' send him away? A more faithful rendering would be not 'sternly' but 'in anger'. It is possible that the anger is directed at the leprosy, considered as an exterior invasion, and so he sent it (the disease) away. At least Jesus' whole-hearted emotional involvement with the sufferer is palpable.

Who are the equivalent of lepers in our society?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 12th February 2012



First Reading: *Leprosy*

Leviticus 13:1-2. 44-46

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 leprosy: 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."

*This reading from the Law sets the scene for Jesus' healing in the gospel reading. Leprosy in its modern medical sense (*Mycobacterium leprae*) is a devastating disease, leading to the loss of fingers, and then even whole hands and feet. These biblical regulations were, with good reason, designed to prevent contagion. In biblical times lack of precise diagnosis meant that other skin diseases, such as psoriasis and even acne, were often lumped together with what we today call leprosy. So the worst thing about many of the lesser forms of 'leprosy' would have been the isolation, for all 'lepers' were cut off from all human society. The priests were involved not so much as sacred ministers but as reliable persons to judge the symptoms, though the sacrifice of thanks for disappearance of the disease was a genuine religious thanksgiving.*

How may we reach out to those who are treated as outcasts in our society?

Second Reading: *Liberty and Love*

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

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.

This is the last reading this year from First Corinthians. It ends a section of the letter, and so should be read as a summing up. Paul has just quoted a slogan which that difficult community had thrown in his face, 'Everything is permissible'. This was the conclusion they drew from the abolition of the restrictions of the Jewish Law. Paul's principle was that the Spirit was an inner guide, so that no external restrictions were necessary. With their slogan the Corinthians had come to believe that there were no limits on what they might do, so Paul now adds various pieces of guidance. Firstly: 'whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of God'. If the glory of God is always before our minds, we can hardly go wrong. 'Never do anything offensive'; that is, never lead anyone else into sin. It is easy sometimes to put people in a situation in which they are bound to fail, through fear or anger or frustration, or just because they are unequal to the task. 'Take me as for your model, as I take Christ'. To us moderns this may sound arrogant, but Paul regarded himself as the Servant of the Lord Jesus, just as Jesus regarded himself as the Servant of the Lord. So Paul is encouraging the self-confident Corinthians to put themselves in the position of servants, serving the community for the glory of God. No matter what our position, we can always do something more for the community.

How can you be a better servant of Christ and of the community?

“If the glory of God is always before our minds, we can hardly go wrong.”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

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