

English

6th Sunday of the Year B

First Reading [Leviticus 13:1-2.45-46](#)

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. 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."

Second Reading [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.

Gospel [Mark 1:40-45](#)

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.

Meditation

In Jesus' day, leprosy meant not only incurable physical disintegration, but also social and cultural death. It was the supreme "plague" which God inflicted on sinners. It is under the image of a leper that Isaiah depicts the sinful people. It is under this same image that he describes a mysterious Servant who expiates Israel's sin. In this context, Jesus' face-to-face meeting with the leper takes on its full meaning. We see the unclean before the Holy One, the outcast before the Servant who will be cast out, the leper who is impure before the pure one who will be disfigured like a leper.

It is the sinful world that the Saviour touches and purifies. The Messiah has arrived. In him, the banished of society, the living dead are restored. In different degrees, under different forms, leprosy still creates barriers between people. Today's lepers are the very ill forgotten in hospitals, the marginal poor shut up in unhealthy tenements, the addicts shunned by high-minded societies. Before all these lepers, we ourselves must take part in the simple story of the encounter between Jesus and the leper. For we too must recognize that we are all lepers. We must disclose the sins that we keep hidden. We must cry out in acknowledgement of our moral frailty. Thus we regain life and take our places in the community of the redeemed. Once touched and healed, we can in turn proclaim the Word. Rejoicing in health regained, we can welcome the outcast and the rejected, acknowledged in their human dignity.