



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
February 14, 2021

The Courage to Heal

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Leprosy was a highly contagious skin disease that led to certain death for anyone who caught it in Jesus' time. For good reason the Jewish law demanded that a leper live set apart and cry out as he walked along to keep everyone at a safe distance. Imagine the pitiful scene of everyone discreetly but purposefully moving away at the sound of someone shouting, "Unclean, unclean!"

Yet the leper doesn't shout to keep Jesus away. He walks right up to our Lord and confesses his faith in Jesus' power to heal him of this incurable bacteria. He humbly admits his contagious illness and places himself before Jesus. And unlike anyone else might do, Jesus doesn't run

away, he walks toward him. He does the unthinkable. He touches him!

We need not be ashamed of our deadly sin that eats away at our heart and cripples our ability to love. Go to Jesus, expose it to him, and let his loving touch transform you.

The terrible disease of leprosy was still a major problem well into the nineteenth century when St. Damian, a Belgian missionary, went to the Hawaiian Island of Molokai to serve as parish priest to all the lepers quarantined on that island. Not fearing to touch them, he cared for them for many years until, as expected, he contracted the disease and died of it.

This is what it means to be a Christian! Be like Jesus. Be not afraid of your wounds or those of others, no matter how repellent, and give of yourself to care for them. +

Sunday Readings

Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46

The individual shall cry out, "Unclean, unclean!"

1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1

Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Mark 1:40–45

"If you wish, you can make me clean."
...[Jesus] said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."

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A Word from Pope Francis

[Jesus says] he is the real instrument of the Father's mercy, who goes to encounter everyone, bringing consolation and salvation, and, in doing so, he manifests God's justice. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf regain their dignity and are no longer excluded because of their disease.

—General Audience, September 7, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How at peace am I with my own wounds, sins, and imperfections?
- Am I mature enough to seek help and also help others through their suffering?

Light Within the Darkness

By Kathleen M. Basi

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

We live in a pretty messed-up world: Countries pursue weapons that could wipe out everything. Mothers turn guns on their children. We justify derision, bigotry, and violence in the name of God. Young people objectify themselves and their peers because they lack good models of how to give and receive love.

The problems aren't hard to identify. What's hard is figuring out what to do about them. They're so big, so sprawling, and so tightly woven. Where do I even begin? What's the right plan of action? How can lowly little me, with my couple hundred social-networking friends, interrupt the momentum of this juggernaut?

My impotence makes me angry. I'm jaded by the partisan bickering that ensures nothing ever gets solved. I'm tempted to throw up my hands and write off the future—and my responsibility to it—altogether. What do my actions matter, anyway, amid so much brokenness, so much willful ignorance?

But when I spend all my energy on anger, I cease to recognize the beauty, the potential for good, that exists alongside



and is sometimes intertwined with the bad. The voices shouting vitriol, anger, narcissism, and greed drown out the whisper of the divine.

I bury myself in self-righteous judgment until, without realizing it, I become part of the problem instead of the solution. I go looking for a safe, insulated enclave, someplace the problems can't reach me, where I'm absolved of the duty to act where, when, and how I'm able.

The opportunity to act does exist, but it's usually uncomfortable. It's easier to stand back and complain than to dig in, get my hands dirty, and risk learning—through abject failure or mediocre success—how small I really

am. I think this is why St. Paul tells us to contemplate what is true and pure: What I focus on determines my reality. If I wrap my worldview in anger, I leave no room for kindness and compassion. But if I fix my sights on all that is good and holy, I'm fortified against the bitterness and disillusionment that might otherwise cripple me as I fight the unwinnable battle against the effects of sin. After all, let's face it—as Henri Nouwen observed, the world will always be dark. My efforts aren't going to change that.

Fortunately, God doesn't look at the bottom line when measuring my job performance. As St. Teresa of Calcutta famously said, "My job is not to succeed, but to be faithful to my mission." +

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PRAYER

Lord, your love transcends the boundaries of the human condition. Open my eyes to see your face in all people.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 15–20

Monday, Weekday:
Gn 4:1-15, 25 / Mk 8:11–13


Tuesday, Weekday:
Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mk 8:14–21

Wednesday, Ash Wednesday: Jl 2:12–18 /
2 Cor 5:20—6:2 / Mt 6:1–6, 16–18

Thursday after Ash Wednesday:
Dt 30:15–20 / Lk 9:22–25

Friday after Ash Wednesday:
Is 58:1–9a / Mt 9:14–15

Saturday after Ash Wednesday:
Is 58:9b–14 / Lk 5:27–32

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