



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

Fr. David Rosenberg  
Institute for Spiritual Direction

*Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched the leper, and said to him,  
"I do will it. Be made clean." Mark 1:41*

In this week's Gospel account from Mark, we hear that "*Jesus touched the leper.*" Mosaic Law was strict about the way the Jews were to handle lepers. It was well known that leprosy was transmitted through physical contact, and touching a leper was an obvious way to break the law. Therefore, lepers and anyone who would associate with them were by law outcasts.

*"Anyone with a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp." (Leviticus 13:44-46)* Because this leper approached Jesus, he threatened his life and the life of Jesus. He must have been convinced that Jesus, by reputation, was a miracle maker and healer. Grace propelled him forward, and Jesus, in a most intimate gesture, reached out his hand. Indeed, Jesus was proven to be the miracle maker.

The leper represents the downtrodden, those who at times are defiled by physical and spiritual wounds and burdened by sin. When burdened and traumatized in such a manor, we retreat within ourselves, psycho-spiritually "*Living alone and outside the camp.*" This is another way to say that in times of trouble many tend to distance themselves from the Christian Community, the Body of Christ. But, in Matthew 9:36 we read, "*When Jesus saw the crowds his heart was filled with pity for them...*"

Evil in the world is the cause of the dilemmas that challenge Christians every day. The devil persuades us to isolate the "*lepers*" in our life. But Christ teaches us that we are called to be Christ the Healer for others, taking on His Sacred Heart and radiating his mercy. How can we, as Christian disciples, offer tenderness and goodness to those "*lepers*" that are to be isolated? Look no further than the scripture of the separation of the goats from the sheep found in Matthew 25:31-46. "*I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.*" I was a leper, and you touched me, cared for me, and I was healed. "*Truly I tell you, whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me.*"

Scripture reminds us that no matter the sin, Jesus loves us. It is good to look to the tenderness of God as spoken in Hosea 11:

*I led them with cords of human kindness,  
with ties of love.  
To them I was like one who lifts  
a little child to the cheek,  
and I bent down to feed them.*

This week, it is good to reflect on the times that we turn to the Lord in times of trouble. The times that the tenderness of Jesus filled us with forgiveness, healing, joy and salvation.

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark**

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.

***The Gospel of the Lord***