

## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2024

Let me start this homily with the invocation of Psalm 24: 3 “Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? [It is] the man with clean hands and pure heart (...).” In other words, only the clearness of the body (external-physical) and the clearness of the heart (internal) can guaranty someone to be in the presence of God.

Thus, there were things or behaviors that made someone impure or unclean. For instance, a contact with a pagan or blood, like in the case of hemorrhage, or some diseases whose infection modifies the external aspect of the individual, like leprosy, made someone impure. Plus, it was generally believed that a disease is a consequence of sin. Because of the importance of this matter, Moses legislated about it.

The first reading of today shows what the fate of someone having leprosy would be. It was required for his state to be attested by a priest and he declared unclean. He himself had to keep a low profile, to shave his beard, to let people know that he was unclean and live isolated from the rest of population, outside in a camp.

The best representation we can have today of the situation of leprosy, at that time, is that of the Island of Molokai in Hawaii. In 1865, the Legislative Assembly of the Kingdom of Hawaii, to avoid contagion and further propagation of the disease, passed a law isolating the lepers and prohibiting any contact with them. However, a young Belgian Priest named Damien de Veuster, newly ordained and inspired by Christian principles, decided to dedicate his life to the lepers as a Chaplain in 1873. After 16 years at their service, he contracted the disease and died in 1889 at the age of 49. He was canonized by Pope St John Paul II in 2009.

The big inspiration and the example that gave Fr Damien courage to do what he did for the lepers was Jesus. Today's Gospel shows precisely how our Lord handled the leper. Unlike the Law of Moses that prescribed the rejection of those having leprosy, Jesus treats the leper with humanity, respect and love. When someone loves, he is able to break taboos and prohibitions. Is it not love stronger than the rules, stronger than the law? Is not light stronger than darkness? Whenever someone opens a window, darkness will give way to light that enlightens the room. That is what our Lord has done for the leper.

By touching him, our Lord offered him the healing he was seeking for many years and without which he would have forever remained an outcast and a pariah in society. By this healing, our Lord opens a new area of grace where God takes on himself the suffering of his people, and where nobody is excluded before him because of his physical or mental situation.

Because his Father in heaven is compassionate toward his creatures, our Lord had compassion with the leper and wanted to put an end to his miserable situation. The gesture of our Lord challenges us to be like him, to be touched by the misery and the suffering of our fellow humans and to take prompt actions in response to their problems.

The healing of the leper and his sending to see the priest is an invitation to make the Church a gathering space and a welcoming community, where the wall that divides people is destroyed. Gathered as God's people within the Church, we worship and praise the Lord while we receive his blessing through the listening to the word and the reception of the Sacraments. It is unfortunate that some people think or find it okay to stay home and pray in their room without joining their brothers in prayer. They forget that any isolation will eventually weaken them in their faith.

We have to encourage one another to attend the Church. Those who exclude others from their circle of life are concerned only with their external appearance, like their disease, the color of their skin, their origin or their background. God on the contrary looks at the heart, at what is invisible to the naked eyes. Moreover, for our Lord the worst disease someone can have is not physical, but spiritual. Sin is more destructive than human disease, because if someone loses his eternal life, there is nothing else he can do to save himself.

That is why the physical cleansing of the leper our Lord performed points to the interior healing that reconciles someone with his God. We should never forget that beyond our healthy appearance, we all need that reconciliation with our God through the Sacrament of confession, because we are spiritually sick.

There is more to the healing of the leper. By healing the leper our Lord establishes him in his dignity as a human being and a son of God having the same rights as anybody else. To be human is to be recognized as created in the image of God. Whatever might be the physical or the mental condition of someone, nothing can destroy that image in him. This point is crucial and invites us to respect anyone who is physically or mentally diminished, like the handicapped, paralyzed or the elderly. We are not only a society of healthy people, but also of the sick, the elderly, and the diminished.

We who are in good shape have the duty to care for the sick, to pay attention to them, to be patient with them, to accept them and to tolerate them, in spite of their diminished condition. These people remind us that we, who are healthy, are lucky to be in form. For that reason we have to be thankful to God. But, they also remind us of the vulnerability of the human condition. Perhaps today we are healthy and everything works well with us, but who knows what can happen to us tomorrow?

Let us open up to God in prayer for our sick brothers and sisters. May our hearts be also open to them as we recognize in them the suffering Jesus. May we come we work tirelessly for the integration of those living in isolation, especially the needy and the poor.

**Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46; 1 Corinthians 10: 31-11: 1; Mark 1: 40-45**



Homily Date: February 11, 2024  
© 2024 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)

Document Name: 20240211homily.pdf