



Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

February 14, 2021

GOSPEL MARK 1: 40-45

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.





GOSPEL MARK 1:40-45

Taken from Oh For Heaven's Sake, by Fr John Antony 2015, p 44-45

Have you heard of St. Damien of Molokai, also known as the “leper priest”? He has an amazing story, so amazing that they even made a movie of it. In 1873 he volunteered to work on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, which was a leper colony. He built hospitals, clinics, churches, and some six hundred coffins for those who died of leprosy. Twelve years later, in 1885, he contracted leprosy himself, and he died in 1889.

This is exactly what Jesus does in the gospel of Mark as He seeks those segregated by society. A leper approaches Jesus and requests healing. But did you notice how Jesus healed the man? He did exactly what He should NOT have done: He touched the man. In the book of Leviticus, from the Old Testament, Moses expressly tells the people that lepers should be expelled from camp and never touched. But Jesus comes precisely to seek the lost and the lonely, the ostracized and the outcasts, those who live on the fringes and those who are forgotten. When Jesus touched the leper, He did not just remove his uncleanness, He also brought him back from the margins into the heart of society, just as St. Damien touched the lepers of Molokai and made them feel loved and accepted.

Obviously, we cannot all go to Molokai and work with lepers to make them feel accepted, but there are people at the edges of our lives, and we can reach out to them. There is no better example of this than Pope Francis. He is constantly calling Catholics to seek those at the “peripheries” (the edges, the margins)—the refugees and immigrants, the addicts, the mentally ill and those in prison. Aren't these people the modern-day lepers who live “outside the camp” and whom we dare not touch?

But they are precisely the people who merit our special attention and love. There may be people in our own circle of family and friends whom we have pushed to the edges of our hearts. Sometimes, those who are farthest from our hearts live under the same roof.

When have I felt on the margins and someone reached out to me? Share if you would like.



Pope Francis washing the feet of prisoners in Rome on Holy Thursday in 2013.

Who do I need to reach out to?

What's holding me back from reaching out and touching them?

How can I change my attitude and reach out to someone this week?

