

## SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 11, 2018 Cycle B

**Opening prayer:** *Good and gracious God, thank you for enabling us to gather together to listen to your holy Word and to share life and fellowship. May your Holy Spirit show each of us the message you want us to hear today. Cleanse our hearts of all that would prevent us from hearing your Word and acting on it. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Sharing life:** How did you experience God's presence and activity in your life last week?

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** There is a strong *contrast* between the first reading in which lepers must declare themselves "unclean" and the Gospel in which Jesus declares a leper "clean." In the second reading, Paul encourages the Corinthians to do all for the glory of God and to protect their unity.

Consider reading the commentary before or after each Scripture reading.

### FIRST READING: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

In Old Testament times, leprosy is a term used to describe a variety of chronic skin diseases. When the priest determines that one has a contagious disease, the person is declared "unclean" and banished from the community. If someone unknowingly approaches the leper, he/she must shout "Unclean! Unclean!" for such *contact* renders the "clean" person "unclean." If a leper is cured, he must go to the priest to undergo purification before he can be readmitted to the community. Because there is widespread belief that leprosy is brought on by sin, lepers are not only physically loathsome and socially dangerous, but are also viewed as morally reprehensible.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 32

This is one of the seven "penitential psalms" in the Psalter. It is a prayer of thanksgiving for the removal of sin.

### SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 10:31--11:1

This reading concludes Paul's teaching on whether it is lawful for Christians to eat food of the meat of animals that had been offered to idols in pagan sacrifices.

Paul sees no problem in eating such food since Christians do not believe in idols. Therefore, the food is not unclean. However, Paul is exhorting the stronger members of this community to be sensitive to the weaker members, or less formed members, to abstain from such food if it might give scandal to new members who may still believe that eating such food is a form of idolatry. Paul is encouraging the more formed members of the community to sacrifice

some of their freedom for the glory of God. "*Whatever you do ... do for the glory of God.*"

When Paul says, he seeks "*to please everyone in every way*" he is *not* saying that he gives up his principles in order to be a 'crowd pleaser'. Rather, he is saying he too sacrifices his freedom in order to make the Gospel attractive to those he is seeking to evangelize.

### GOSPEL: Mark 1:40-45

Although excluded from the community, lepers are allowed to attend synagogue, but they sit behind a protected screen, never daring to come into the main part of the synagogue. While we do not know the exact location of today's event, perhaps it occurs during a synagogue service. Recognizing Jesus to be a holy man, the leper may have done the unthinkable; he rushes from behind the screen and approaches Jesus. He believes Jesus *can* heal him, but he was not sure if Jesus will *want* to heal him. "*If you wish, make me clean.*" Then *Jesus* does the unthinkable, he stretches out his hand and *touches* the *untouchable* thereby incurring ritual uncleanness. Jesus tells the rejected man: "*Of course I want to heal you. Be made clean.*" Jesus' touch heals the man not only on a *physical* level but also on a *social* and *spiritual* level. He no longer feels rejected by the community or by God.

We notice again a reference to the *messianic secret* (explained in last week's commentary). The leper is told not to tell anyone about his healing—but how does one contain wonderful good news? So he runs off and tells everyone. The man is told to go to the priest so he can get a certificate declaring himself clean, enabling him to once again mix with the community and worship with them.

## **FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS**

1. What verse spoke to you and why?
2. Whom do we or you tend to regard as unclean today? Example, child molesters? Who else?
3. Can you think of behaviors that sometimes occur in parishes that might scandalize others?
4. Who or what types of people may not feel welcome in our parishes today? What can be done to remove such rejection?
5. What is Jesus saying to you in the gospel about how a Christian disciple should act?

## **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

Name one way you can act on today's readings. Suggestion: Think of someone who feels isolated or somewhat excluded. See what you can do to heal that person's sense of isolation.

## **CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

Especially pray for all who suffer from skin diseases. Pray for those researching a cure. Pray for all who feel excommunicated from society and Church today, e.g., pedophiles.

## **Concluding Prayer**

God of all people,  
remind us that your love  
knows no boundaries.  
You love the outcasts  
and the oppressed  
with a love that is fierce  
in its protection and grace.

When our lives get too comfortable,  
nudge us into going beyond  
our own boundaries,  
bringing outsiders into  
the warmth of our communities.  
This we pray through  
Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## **Save the Date!!**

**Saturday, March 10, 2018**

**Annual Day of Reflection**

by the Space Coast Alliance of  
Small Christian Communities with  
Father Dave Pivonka, TOR,  
The Wild Goose Is Loose!