

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

Lord, "If you wish, you can make me clean... I do will it. Be made clean."

February 14, 2021

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

LEV 13:1-2, 44-46; 1 COR 10:31–11:1; MK 1:40-45

God created us because he wants to be in relationship with us. He does not have to love us. God wants to. The reason we exist is relationship. We were made for love.

This is a kind of Good News that is not possible without the Divine, for no other love for us is so pure, so unconditional, so freely given. But, in spite of the perfection of this design, we are also broken by sin. Even though we are made for relationship, so many things separate us and limit the love for which we were created.

Our first reading reminds us that physical circumstances such as illness, like leprosy, can separate us from one another. The person with leprosy was to live apart from the rest of the community until a priest declared them ritually clean again. During this time of quarantine, a person with leprosy also had to warn others of their condition by wearing torn clothing, maintaining an unkempt appearance (covered mouth with beard), and shouting "UNCLEAN! UNCLEAN!".

There are many other physical forms of separation, such as a job that takes a loved one far away, an emotional wound that demands physical distance as a response, and, of course, death itself. Even in recent times, we have to respond to this deadly contagious Pandemic-COVID-19, with similar protocols- wearing nose masks, social distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, and Vaccination, quarantining- all in order to mitigate the impact of this debilitating disease. Sounds familiar? Indeed, "There is nothing new under the sun...", says Qoheleth (Eccles. 1:9-11).

But spiritual separation also wounds us. Just as leprosy could be passed from one person to another, so also sin infects and hurts those around us. We can see how gossip or lack of integrity influences others. Selfishness or greed hurts those who are most vulnerable. All these vices separate us from the love of God, and from each other.

The damage of sin is infectious, just as physical illness is contagious. This is the brokenness into which Jesus enters with his mercy and compassion. The leper's faith can lead us also to this confidence, for us to summon courage today to shout to the Lord saying: "If you wish, you can make me clean". And he will surely respond: "I do will it. Be made clean".

Jesus, the eternal Word of God, moved with pity, draws near to us! He reaches out to us, in a particular way through his sacramental presence in this Mass, because he wants to heal every separation, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual. He does will to make us clean. What wounds can we bring to him today?

What broken relationship, separation, or sin needs his healing presence? This is why Christ invites us here, this is why he draws near and reaches out to us. I do will it, he tells us, be made clean.