

St. Frances Cabrini - Lebanon, TN
Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B
February 11, 2018

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

1 Cor 10:31-11:1

Mark 1:40-45

Today we hear of Jesus healing the leper. To appreciate this, we need to understand a little about leprosy. We start to get this from our first reading with God's instruction to Moses and Aaron on dealing the disease. It tells us how one with leprosy was dealt with as it pertains to the community.

Now for the majority of leprosy cases, people would become disfigured. At times, they would even lose body parts affected by the disease. This was a very painful disease with really no means to cure. So to protect the rest of the community, they would be separated from them. Think of this like the precautions we make with the modern day flu virus. Locally, the schools closed due to this. Leprosy was much worse. Separated from their family. Separated from their friends. Separated from the church. The only way to be allowed back in the community was to show the priest the healed wounds, which didn't happen very often.

To make matters worse, those with leprosy were considered sinful. It was believed that a sin they committed caused this disease or any other disease. They were wrongfully accused of doing something they did not. And then they were required to yell out "Unclean" so no one would come in contact with them.

Imagine this, being separated from all you love at a time when you need people the most. Have you ever been sick and a loved one took care of you? Husbands, while this may be a stereo type, we love it when our wives

take care of us with that near death experience we have with the common cold. You know, a temperature of 98.7°.

How many out here in the congregation love this church family? You would be separated from this too. You would not be allowed to come to the worship space. You would not be allowed to be near the people you worship with. You are separated from the people you need the most at a time when you need them the most. Not very comforting is it?

All this time we have talked about the severe cases of leprosy. Let's talk about other things that would separate them. I occasionally have bouts with psoriasis. How many of you have psoriasis, the dry skin condition? This too qualified as leprosy. This is where we get the term white as a leopard. How many have a cut, whether covered with a band aid other not? This would cause you to be excluded from worship because you were considered unclean. Two weeks ago, I cut my thumb and required stitches. I would have been banned from church due to the cut. A woman giving birth, and the child were considered unclean. One of the most beautiful and natural act was considered unclean, mother and child.

Remember earlier in the homily when I mentioned a leper had to announce "Unclean"? The leper in the gospel broke the law by approaching Jesus. Then telling Jesus "If you wish, you can make me clean". Jesus showed compassion. Jesus himself broke the law by touching the leper. Jesus willed to heal him. Jesus met him where he was. Jesus healed more than his physically condition. He healed him as a person. Jesus is our example, as Pope Francis would say, to reach out to the margins.

How does this apply to us today? Do you feel separated from family or friends? Or worse, are you harboring resentment toward someone? Are you considering them a leper, unclean in your attitude toward them? Our

attitude toward others can easily make them feel alienated. Is that our intent?

In Bishop Spalding's homily at the prayer service before his ordination, he mentioned the three M's for us to focus on. Mission, mercy and the margins. Reaching out to the margins aligns with Pope Francis. He also mentioned having the heart of Jesus in all that we do. Don't treat others as if they were a leper. We need to have mercy towards others. We need to have compassion towards others. We need to treat others with love and respect. We need to have the heart of Jesus. We need to ask for the heart of Jesus. We need to show the heart of Jesus to all we meet, each and every day. When we do this, we will not only have the heart of Jesus, we can be the face of Christ to them.