



SCRIPTURE READINGS: LECTIONARY, YEAR B, #77

The Scripture readings speak of those who are marginalized in society and are seeking healing and acceptance. As disciples of Jesus, we are challenged to act with His love and compassion so as to bring healing and hope to our brothers and sisters.

FIRST READING: LEVITICUS 13:1-2, 44-46

- The primary focus of the reading is not so much on leprosy or any other skin disease as it is on being “unclean.”
- In the social context of the time and culture, to be “unclean” resulted in being cut off from others: socially estranged, religiously alienated, and ritually abandoned.
- The “unclean” and the other members of the community kept their distance from one another so that the “clean” would not be contaminated or infected by those existing at the margins.
- It was the responsibility of the religious leadership to declare a person “clean” and readmit him/her into the community’s life.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 32

- Psalm 32 is one of the seven Penitential Psalms.
- The psalmist experienced being blessed by encountering God’s mercy and forgiveness.
- The emphasis is on God’s desire to heal and the psalmist’s capacity to admit his need for God’s mercy and forgiveness.
- Ultimately, everything depends on God’s generous compassion and mercy.
- The psalmist expresses joy and exaltation in God’s willingness to act on behalf of those in need of God’s saving presence.

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-11:1

- Paul challenges the early Christians in Corinth to “do everything for the glory of God.”
- This becomes the fundamental principle for Paul’s preaching and his application of the Gospel to daily Christian living.
- In acting on the Gospel, Paul seeks not his “own benefit but that of the many.”
- Following the example of Christ, Paul has adapted his own Gospel living to the needs of others so that they may encounter Christ.
- Since Paul’s life and ministry are in imitation of Christ, the Christians of Corinth will actually be imitating the faithful compassion of Jesus by following Paul’s example in meeting the needs of others.

GOSPEL: MARK 1:40-45

- Ignoring the social fears and restrictions associated with his disease, the leper approaches Jesus and asks to be made clean.
- He does not ask to be cured. He asks to be made clean indicating a desire not only for physical healing, but reincorporation into the community from which he has been alienated.
- The leper believes that Jesus can make him clean. The question is: Will he? (i.e., “If you wish...”). Jesus must choose to act on his behalf.
- Ignoring the same social fears and restrictions, Jesus touches the leper and makes him clean.
- The leper proclaims his cleansing and so witnesses to Jesus’ power to save.
- This witness draws many more to Christ.

HOMILY STARTERS: REFLECTIONS ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS

The following considerations are intended to assist homilists to break open the Word and connect the Scripture readings with the Catholic Charities in-pew appeal.

FIRST READING: LEVITICUS 13:1-2, 44-46	RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 32
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who live at the margins of today's society often feel like the lepers of ancient Israel: unclean, the objects of others' fears, and cut off from the community.• Those who are homeless, incarcerated, unemployed, suffering from addictions, experiencing developmental disabilities, pregnant outside of marriage, isolated elderly persons, etc. may suffer through alienation from family, friends, and the extended community.• Not unlike Israel's priests of old, Christians need to proclaim their marginalized brothers and sisters to be valued and accepted members of our human family and loved recipients of the community's care and concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God continues to desire the healing of all persons since God is infinite compassion, mercy, and love.• The psalm response (i.e., "I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble...") expresses the fact that all human beings experience times of trouble. Often "the joy of salvation" is discovered in the ways we reach out to one another as the bearers of God's compassion, mercy, and love.• Because we are the recipients of God's mercy ourselves, we are also charged with being instruments of God's mercy for others.
SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-11:1	GOSPEL: MARK 1:40-45
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Like Paul, we are called to imitate Christ's compassionate and transforming love.• In responding to the call to live the Gospel of Jesus, we are challenged not to seek only our own good, but that which will benefit others.• What we do on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need reveals the glory of God and our own commitment to imitating Christ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Like Jesus, if we wish, we can do something to assist our brothers and sisters in need. He acted on behalf of the leper. How will we choose to imitate Him?• Like the leper in today's Gospel, the stories of those who have benefited from the ministries of Catholic Charities proclaim the transforming love of Christ concretized by the support and work of the Church community.

CONNECTIONS WITH SUNDAY'S LITURGICAL TEXTS

The Collect for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time asks that we be "fashioned by [God's] grace" implying that God will act to cleanse us and bring us to new life - that is, to be "a dwelling pleasing" to God. The Paschal Mystery of Christ makes it possible for us to live in God and God in us. This transformation empowers us to live and love in imitation of Jesus. These same themes of cleansing and renewal found in the Collect and today's Scripture texts are repeated in the Prayer over the Offerings. This prayer implies that the Eucharist should lead us to do God's will and so becomes "the source of eternal reward." The uniting of our wills to that of God's will is an act of worship which is incarnated in our daily Gospel living. This is how Eucharist celebrated becomes Eucharist lived. It is the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Charity being manifested in our care and concern for others. The Eucharist is "that food by which we truly live" as proclaimed in the Prayer after Communion. Like the leper in today's Gospel, we are to "go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," especially by our actions of compassion and love for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in need which transform their lives and welcome them to encounter Christ's mercy through us.