

## **6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Cycle B)**

February 15, 2008 -- Deacon Bill Nourse, Ed.D. – Marriage Sunday

### **INTRODUCTION**

Last Sunday, we heard about the sufferings of Job. He thought he'd never see happiness again in his life. But somehow, he hung onto his faith in God and bore his sufferings. He kept going somehow.

In our first reading today, we hear of suffering of a different kind. Those stricken with leprosy not only had to bear their disease – they also had to bear being permanent outcasts from society, separated from virtually all human contact.

In those days, leprosy was feared, hated, beyond all human understanding, beyond any remedy. No one knew where leprosy came from, or how it spread. The only thing they knew to do was to isolate the person who had it, to condemn them to a lifetime alone in the world. To be a leper was to be alienated from human society, ostracized, spurned, avoided, shunned by everyone. Rabbinic law called for a leper to be stoned if he dared to approach anyone.

They lived outside the community – an enforced lifetime of solitude, knowing it will never end – that must be a form of hell on Earth.

### **MOVE**

We might think of leprosy as a metaphor for sin. Leprosy separates us and isolates us from other people. Sin isolates us and separates us from God. Permanent separation from other people would be unbearable. Permanent separation

from God would be worse than unbearable. Sin is more awful than even leprosy.

For the last two Sundays, we've heard of sick people, people sick in body and mind, being brought to Jesus to be healed. No one but Jesus could heal lepers. All who needed healing turned to him.

The leper, forbidden from approaching anyone, approached Jesus. Instead of shunning him, instead of stoning him, Jesus reaches out His hand to him, touches him, extends mercy and compassion to him, and heals him.

And what did Jesus get for showing the power of God? In a way, He got to change places with the leper. The leper had lived on the outside, looking in. Now that he was healed, he could rejoin the community. Jesus had lived in the community, surrounded by people. Now He couldn't enter a town openly and had to remain outside, in deserted places. But still they sought him out.

## MOVE

Jesus healed the leper right then and there. But He still admonished him to follow the prescribed ritual and go and present himself to the priest. It's sort of the same for us – even though our sins may be forgiven, we still need to avail ourselves of the healing power of the sacraments.

The second reading reminds us to emulate the lepers – to turn to Jesus for healing, to turn to the sacraments for healing, to emulate Him so that the glory of God – the love of God – may be made visible in us.

## MOVE

Today is Marriage Sunday. This is the day when we honor the sacrifices and the rewards, the joys and the sorrows, that are part of a good marriage. A good marriage is one way we can show forth the love of God, the glory of God.

I know marriage isn't always perfect sweetness and light. The last few years have been interesting for Chris and me. Kidney stones, gallstones, cataracts and cancer and open-heart surgery – we try to keep it in perspective. I know that many of you have had trying times as well. But even when things aren't perfect – well, at least it's not leprosy. And there's a lot of opportunity for faith and healing and mercy and compassion and forgiveness in marriage.

In a moment, we'll ask all our married couples to come up and renew their marriage vows. In the meantime, we might reflect on the power of healing, the power of forgiveness, the power of unconditional love. The unconditional love God has for us is a model for the love we should have for each other.

Each time we recall our marriage vows; each time we are tender and considerate; every time we compromise or reconcile; every time we are thoughtful and unselfish, every time we forgive, every time we put the good of the marital relationship ahead of our own individual desires, especially when we don't "feel like it," God's grace love and glory manifests itself in our lives.

MARRIAGE SUNDAY BLESSING after the homily.

## READINGS

### Reading I

Lv 13:1-2, 44-46

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron,  
"If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule or blotch  
which appears to be the sore of leprosy,  
he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest,  
or to one of the priests among his descendants.  
If the man is leprous and unclean,  
the priest shall declare him unclean  
by reason of the sore on his head.  
"The one who bears the sore of leprosy  
shall keep his garments rent and his head bare,  
and shall muffle his beard;  
he shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!'  
As long as the sore is on him he shall declare himself unclean,  
since he is in fact unclean.  
He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp."

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 32:1-2, 5, 11

**R. (7) I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

Blessed is he whose fault is taken away,  
whose sin is covered.

Blessed the man to whom the LORD imputes not guilt,  
in whose spirit there is no guile.

**R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
my guilt I covered not.

I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD,"  
and you took away the guilt of my sin.

**R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just;  
exult, all you upright of heart.

**R. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

### Reading II

1 Cor 10:31-11:1

Brothers and sisters,  
Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
do everything for the glory of God.  
Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or  
the church of God,  
just as I try to please everyone in every way,  
not seeking my own benefit but that of the many,  
that they may be saved.  
Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

### Gospel

Mk 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.