

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Jesus stretched out His hand and touched a leper

The main mission of Jesus is to renew the face of the earth, restore creation to its original glory by establishing the kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven. This he did by freeing humanity, and indeed all creation from alienation. The core task was to liberate all humanity from anything, which isolates it from its creator whose image and likeness they bear. He worked to achieve this union with God by extinguishing the vile, which estranges God from creation, nature from nurture, humanity from life, nations from nations, people from peoples, cultures from culture not to create uniformity but so that the image of God may be manifested in the humanity. Whenever, Jesus encounters anything not intended by the creator, he does something about it. Many times, such actions come in the form of what we call miracles. The miracles of Jesus in many times and many cultures are celebrated as being marvelous. I think that these actions of Jesus are more pedagogical than marvelous. Through these miracles, such as cleansing the leper as we reflect today, Jesus primarily restores creation to its original wholeness and dignity; just as we all pray in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." While we pray for God's kingdom, what Jesus was doing on the immediacy was leading his Church to her principal mission which is to restore wholeness through empathy and caring; just by stepping out of our comfort zones.

The image of today's reflection is leprosy. This story is short, practical, sympathetic, and shocking. Imagine for a moment,

- the leper's sickness and the pains which he bore;
- the social inhuman conditions which he found himself through leprosy,
- his helplessness and extradition from family, friends and his community,
- his humble acknowledgment of the help he could get from his society in the person of Jesus: "if you wish you can make me clean,"
- his undying desire to be healed.
- Jesus' two related actions: his immediate acknowledgment of what ought to be done, and then stepping out of his comfort zone to heal the leper. In all his actions, Jesus is teaching his Church to step out of her convenience and act for the salvation of souls.

Leprosy in the Jewish culture was a powerful symbol of alienation. Jesus stood against it and destroyed it. He has empowered his Church to challenge any social concept, political ideology or religious claims, which compromise human dignity. This we can do by confronting every form of exclusivity and the isolation that comes with it. It is our mission to heal the sick with patience and love. We have to stand with those who suffer and labor with them; investing all our resources for their restoration. The question today is directed to the mother Church and all of us her children: to what extent have we stretched our convenience and resources to touch in other to heal the social leprosy in our society. We have spent time debating on policies on leprosy, but, we have do a little to heal the leper. **Mission, as we step into forty days of encountering Jesus, let us heal every leper in our lives and in our society.**

Father Chrysogonus