



6th Sunday Ord. Time¹, Yr B

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Jesus moves from the Synagogue to a disciple's home then the surrounding synagogues. He now moves to the open country. Jesus is becoming famous in the country of Galilee by the cures he is performing: freeing possessed people, healing people of diseases and then enabling Simon's mother-in-law recover from a fever. But now in the open country, Jesus is approached by a leper. Because leprosy slowly rots the body and is contagious, lepers had to live on the outskirts of the towns, far from the centers of population². Alleviating a fever is one thing but curing a leper is a cure that shows a much greater power. Jesus' will is to set people free; he is the Saviour of the world. But he is not seeking fame and notoriety rather he is seeing our faith in him that opens for us the way to share eternal life. The leper expresses faith in Jesus and cannot be ignored or avoided as lepers were by the society in general. But to touch the leper and cure him would mean Jesus must live outside in the open country like a leper. There are obvious connections to the contagious illness of COVID-19 and the quarantine and isolation requirements of the Pandemic. We have an over-riding desire to be free again. Jesus had an over-riding desire, i.e. doing God his Father's will, to set people free in every respect (enabling a sharing of eternal life with God).

Read: Mark 1: 40 - 45

Meditatio: How would I react when a person with a contagious disease approached me? How am I coping with social distancing? How do I feel about Australia isolating itself from foreign visitors? How much risk am I prepared to live with? How far am I ready to go to help those who are sick? Have I any experience of Leprosy? Have I had to work with dermatological problems? Am I ready to be tested for COVID-19 if I get symptoms; or am I afraid of the possible consequences of self-isolation and maybe quarantine? Do I do things to be noticed? Am I ready to serve and care for others without counting the cost? Am I happy with abiding by directions from medical authorities, my GP and state authorities? Am I careful in health matters and not being a possible spreader of viruses? Have I been able to support people in isolation or quarantine? Have I let the Pandemic limit my caring and service of others?

Oratio: Pray for all who are sick especially from COVID-19. Pray for health workers and first-responders to emergencies. Pray that those suffering from Leprosy may get timely care. Pray for dermatologists. Pray for all suffering with skin conditions. Pray for doctors and medical authorities. Pray for restraint from those who want to ignore health restrictions. Pray that care and service may be generously offered without counting the cost³. Pray that governments may not limit health care because of fiscal restraints. Pray for fringe dwellers and the housebound. Pray that we may spread the Good News about care and service. Pray for the rich and powerful that they may use their positions with responsibility and compassion. Pray for a change of heart of those who are caught up in corruption of authority. Pray that the desire for freedom may always come with patience and respect for the law. Pray for the spread of the Good News to the world.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Keep in touch with those who are sick.

✍ Fr Joe

Mark 1: 40 - 45

**A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees:
'If you want to' he said 'you can cure me.'**

Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. 'Of course I want to!' he said. 'Be cured!' and the leprosy left him at once and he was cured.

Jesus sent him away and sternly ordered him, 'Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery.'

The man went away, but then started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived.

Even so people from all around would come to him.

Notes:

1 Ordinary Time Sundays are from this Sunday replaced by Sundays of Lent, Easter and by feasts of Trinity and Corpus Christi. So the continuous reading from the Gospel of Mark on Sundays is suspended till 13th June. So continuous reading begins again on 11th Sunday ordinary time i.e. Sundays 7th – 10th are skipped. Most years these Sunday readings are skipped but they are worth your reflection: 7th Sun Yr B Mk 2:1-12 the forgiveness and cure of the paralytic lowered through the roof, 8th Sun Yr B Mk 2:18-22 Jesus is questioned about fasting and "New wine, fresh skins.", 9th Sun Yr B Mk 2:23-3:6 Picking forbidden corn and the Sabbath. And Cure of man with a withered hand, 10th Sun Yr B Mk 3:20-35 Jesus' busyness challenged by his family, Jesus challenged by Scribes about his power to cure (not devilish) and Jesus' response to relatives: "... anyone who does the will of God ...".

2 Consider footnotes on Mk 1:40 of Christian Community Bible, pastoral edn 1988.

3 The way of the Cross can be described as 'care and service without counting the cost'.