

Healing the leper – 6th Sunday: “I do will, be clean”

Last two Sundays and weekdays, many stories of “Jesus healing’: from demons; paralysis, deaf and mute, blind; and today a leper!

1st reading: Lev. 13:2 - “*the Priest would declare him ritually unclean*”. Ritual impurity- very strong cultural tradition in Jewish community.

“Jesus reached out his hand and touched him.” While the leper knelt trembling in the dirt before Him, Jesus touched him. Imagine the leper’s stench. Think about the Lord’s empathy (Mark 1:41). The leper probably hadn’t felt the warmth of human touch in years. Who knows what thoughts flashed through his mind at this moment? Plus, as someone explains, “By touching an unclean leper, Jesus would become ritually defiled himself. / But at Jesus’ touch, nothing remains defiled. Far from becoming unclean, Jesus makes the unclean, clean”.

Here’s then the good news – *Jesus wants to heal your impaired body in spite of your imperfect faith*. Regardless of how serious your situation may be, Jesus has the solution. He can do for you what no other can. Imagine that Jesus takes you by the hand, and help you up, “I tell you to get up”. Jesus takes immediate action to reassure us of His concern.

Jesus normally responds to our requests for healing. How wonderful it is when you sense Him saying to you, ‘I am willing, . !’ Mark tells this story of healing of leper, so we’ll know that Christ possesses both the ability and the willingness to heal us of our illnesses. Therefore, as it has been said, let us “never put a question mark where God has put His will”.

Today, Feb. 11, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, established as the World Day of the Sick, we are also aware of those who have received miraculous physical healings at shrines like Lourdes. These are healings and miracles obtained through unshakable faith in the power of Jesus and total surrender to His will. These stories of healings remind us that Jesus

wishes to heal us today just as he did in Palestine 2000 years ago. *Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and forever.*” (Heb.13:8). There are many stories of atheists being healed and converted to Catholic faith by witnessing the miracles at Lourdes. (*I saw in 1983, many stretches hanging down near the grotto of apparition there*). Through the Church, Jesus continues to heal, taking those who are ill by the hand and saying, *“I do wish, be clean.” My many experiences of sacrament of anointing the sick verifies this. Don’t wait for the last moment; “Anointing” is not any more called the “Last sacrament, or last rite”.*

Jesus accepts us as we are. Hence, let us bring before him our bodily illnesses and spiritual wounds and ask for his healing touch. We should pray for healing which will give us health in every aspect of our lives – not just in our bodies – so that we may function in perfect harmony with people around us and with the environment.

You need to tell Jesus about your pain, your hurt, and feel the love of Jesus replacing your wounds with his love, healing you and making you whole again. For us, the worse situation is the leprosy in our heart: the leprosy of hatred, jealousy, egoism, resentment and unforgiveness are those from which we want to be cleansed from.

We also need to *continue the healing mission of the Church*: As members of the Church, we are not excused from our vocation to be healers. When a friend of ours is terminally ill, the skill of the doctors and their advanced medical tools fail, a soothing presence/ kind word/ a gentle visit/ a phone call/ they all mean a lot, when we are ill.

B&S, always remember that we are healed by healing others. We are healed, though His wounds. Let us be instruments of healing for many, in this wounded world. Because ‘it is in giving that we receive’. Amen