

6TH SUNDAY - ORD. (B)

SIN IS A SPIRITUAL LEPROSY

Leprosy had the power to destroy the beautiful nature of the skin. It could eat up the fingers and toes of its victims and sometimes even the lips and noses. In the olden days, any skin disease was likened to leprosy. Leprosy was considered as a punishment for disobedience to the commandment of God. As we heard in the first reading, all those who were diagnosed with leprosy were ostracised; they were not allowed to join in worship, and mingle with people, and it was the priest who could declare him or her fit to be re-admitted into the society. Leprosy was considered not only as a contagious disease, but also something which made the person unclean and those who came into contact with him as well. So everybody was to avoid a leper.

That is why we heard Jesus after healing the leper, asked the man to go and show himself to the priest, and to offer for his cleansing what Moses proscribed. Jesus did something very unusual; He stretched out His hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." Jesus was not contaminated, but through His touch He made the man clean. This is another evidence to remind us that Jesus turns things around to be good and a blessing. Some examples are using spittle and mud to open the eyes of a blind man, turning water into wine, and dying on the cross to change the curse to a blessing. Stretching His hand was also a sign of His power to heal.

Many of us are physically clean and feel strong but our spirits or souls are suffering from spiritual leprosy due to sin. When we sin we decide to separate ourselves from God. This separation can lead us to everlasting damnation, and there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Unfortunately, we fear physically contagious diseases, but not spiritual ones. We put on all kinds of garments from head to toe to prevent getting any disease. We say 'prevention is better than cure'.

How do we prevent spiritual leprosy? We have to imitate Christ who came to take away sin and to give us remedy for sin. We are to learn from Him because He is humble and gentle of heart (Mt. 11:29). Whatever we do we should do it for the glory of God. Jesus said that He came to do the Father's will; (Heb. 10:9). We are to do the Father's will. Moreover, we are to avoid giving offence to anyone no matter who the person is, and also to the Church. We are to love good and avoid evil.

Many of us have already contracted the disease because of our way of life. We think about ourselves first, and God last. We have done and continue to do many evil things, and fail to do many good things. We have lied, we have been greedy and selfish, filled with lust and bodily desires, we have been backbiting and have committed calumny, marginalized many people due to some reasons best known to us alone, and many other actions and inactions of ours. But we have the opportunity to be cured. Jesus has come to bring us, who are marginalized, back to the fold. He has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and so by the action of the priest, and the power of the Holy Spirit, our spiritual leprosy is cured.

The leper was not ashamed to approach Jesus for help. But many of us are afraid or ashamed to lay bare to the Lord our spiritual diseases. We are ashamed to confess our sins, or we want to confess the less serious ones and hide the most serious ones which separate us from God.

The will of Jesus is that none of us is separated from His Father. “Now the will of Him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but that I should raise it up on the last day”, (Jn. 6:39). He willed to cure the leper, so also He wills to cleanse us from all our sins. St. Paul also wished that all may be saved so he tried not to please himself or seek his own benefit, but to help all and to please everyone. Sin separates us from God, the Church and believers. So it is very important to reconcile with all those we have given offence due to our sins.