

SIXTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

In the second reading, Saint Paul urges the Galatians to do everything they do for the glory of God.
What have you done for the glory of God?

In the Bible, leprosy is not restricted to Hansen's disease, which we associate with Father Damien who lived with the lepers on the Island of Molokai. Leprosy, at the time of Jesus, was any visible skin disease: psoriasis, measles, even a bad allergic reaction etc. The consequences of being declared a leper were:

You had to live outside the camp or city.

You had to dress in a certain way that people would know that you had leprosy.

You could not go closer than 15 feet from a normal person.

If someone is approaching you, you have to shout "unclean", "unclean".

You would become an outcast, cut off from your family and friends.

You had to depend on donated food to survive.

It was a meager, lonely and sad existence.

In the Gospel the leper knelt down in front of Jesus. He breaks the rule by not keeping 15 feet away from Jesus, but he is absolute certain that Jesus has the power to heal. "If you wish, you can make me clean." This is called faith in Jesus. Jesus responds by reaching out and

touching the leper, which he is not permitted to do. The leper is healed. The healing is more than a physical healing. The leper is reunited with his family.

As disciples of Christ, the spiritual message of this story is the need to bring unity where there is division and to reach out to the “outcasts” of our society. The “outcast” could be someone with a disease like AIDS, someone who the society discriminates against, or someone who is in need of your forgiveness.

Can we be like Jesus and reach out and touch them?
Can we make someone who feels like an outcast or has been “discarded as worthless” feel part of a family? Can we forgive and reconcile with those who have hurt us? Where trust has been broken like infidelity in a marriage forgiveness does not restore a relationship to the point of the rupture. Trust has to be re-earned.