



SUNDAY CONNECTION

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Readings For Sunday, February 11, 2018 – Cycle B

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

The Law regarding leprosy is given to Moses and Aaron.

Responsorial - Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

A prayer of contrition and confession for sin.

Reading 2 - 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ.

Gospel Reading - Mark 1:40-45

Jesus cures a person with leprosy, who reports his cure to everyone.

Commentary On The Gospel

In today's Gospel, we continue to hear Mark report the miraculous healings that Jesus performed in Galilee. The Gospel begins with Jesus healing a man with leprosy. Leprosy is a disfiguring, infectious skin disease that has been surrounded by many social and religious taboos throughout history. Although it is infectious, since the 1940s, medical treatments have been available, and the patient no longer needs to be isolated once long-term treatment has begun. In Jesus' time, however, religious and social taboos dictated the behavior of those with leprosy and other skin diseases. If leprosy was identified, the person was declared unclean. People with leprosy lived in isolation from the community. They were instructed to rip their clothes and to announce their presence with loud cries when moving in the community.

In today's Gospel, the man with leprosy took the initiative, approaching Jesus and asking for healing. In doing so, the leper violated the religious customs of the day by approaching a clean person. The confidence of the leper in Jesus' ability to heal him is evident. But his words can also be read as a challenge to Jesus. While healing the man, Jesus touched him, which also violated established social norms. This is an important sign of the depth of Jesus' compassion for the man and an important statement about Jesus' interpretation of the Law of Moses.

Although Jesus touched the leper, he did not break completely with the Law of Moses. He instructed the man not to tell anyone about the cure and told him to present himself to the priests as prescribed by the Law of Moses. The first instruction sounds nearly impossible to honor. Certainly, the man would want to share the good news of his healing, and his quick improvement would require an explanation. The second instruction honors the Law of Moses.

Mark's Gospel tells us that after this healing, it became difficult for Jesus to travel freely. There are several possible explanations for this. There might have been concern about the repercussions of Jesus' breach of social and religious norms. In touching the man with leprosy, Jesus made himself unclean. Mark's narrative, however, leads to the conclusion that Jesus' movement was hampered by his popularity. Despite his instructions, the cured man spread the word about Jesus' healing power. Even when Jesus was in deserted places, people sought him out in search of his healing.