



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 11th February 2018

In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Prayer for the Unemployed and those seeking work

Keynote: Jesus – the healer, the one who forgives sin

Book of Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

In describing the action to be taken if someone was discovered to have the dreaded disease of leprosy, this passage gives no real hint of the fear, and the terrible outcome for those who suffered from leprosy or any skin rash or infection in times past. *'A person infected with leprosy must wear clothing torn, hair disordered, and must shield the upper lip and cry "Unclean! Unclean!" As long as the disease lasts that person must live apart.'* Even now scars or diseases of the skin are unsightly and may fill us with revulsion. Such things may separate us from friends, even from loved ones. The sufferer may feel rejected, suffer from low esteem, or worse may experience ridicule, and victimisation. Such is the close relationship between health of body and health of mind. Sin was understood to cut the sinner off from family and community just as the leper had to cry out 'unclean', and was banished to live outside the camp. We might search in our own hearts and ask are we yet clean all over in Christ, and how do we treat others who are scarred by life? Do we make such people 'live outside the camp' just because they are different in some way?

Responsorial Psalm 31 (32) – A song of joy on being forgiven

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Some modern day critics of the apostle Paul don't always seem to appreciate just how he was 'streets ahead' of his time! Here he directs the Christians of Corinth *'Never do anything offensive to anyone – to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God.'* In the context of the attitudes of that time, this really is earth-shattering stuff! The idea of equality, treating people fairly, even of simple justice was not so commonplace in those days. Paul urges his young Church *'Take me for your model as I take Christ... try to be helpful to everyone at all times... anxious for the advantage of everyone else, so that they may be saved.'* As Paul says, *'Never do anything offensive to anyone – to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God.'* It seems we still have much to learn and do in our own time to bring the gospel alive!

Gospel according to Mark 1:10-45

The leper who approached Jesus was breaking the law! As far as the bystanders were concerned it was an outrage! Worse still Jesus reaches out and *touches* the leper! *'Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him... "Be cured!" he said, and the leprosy left him at once and he was cured.'* This simple gesture of touch, breaks the banishment imposed by this disease, brings healing, and restores the sufferer to his family and community. The evangelist Mark would have us understand that Jesus is the healer of all ills, whether bodily or of mind, and that it is Jesus who sets us free, and restores us reconciled to the community. This is a 'touching' gospel account in more ways than one. Whether in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or the Anointing of the Sick, Christ reaches out to touch us with healing. But first we need to approach Jesus as the leper in the gospel today – boldly and in faith, *'a leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees, "If you want to," he said, "you can cure me"'*.

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Note: Ash Wednesday (a day of fasting and abstinence) takes place on 14th February.