

If you will it, you can make me clean

The leper is not asking

He is making a statement

And he is not asking for a cure

He is requesting to be made clean

Leprosy was and is today a dreaded disease

Today it is called Hansen's disease

And for those that are infected, there is only treatment

There is no cure

That is why in the Old Testament it was dreaded

To really understand what is going on in our Gospel

We need to understand their culture

Because there was no cure

Anyone who had a scab or blotch on their skin indicated infection

They required them to shave their head

Calling out 'unclean, unclean' to any that might approach

Isolating themselves not only from society

But even from family

Being totally isolated from any human contact

It was so bad

They thought it had to be punishment from God

So if it was not leprosy

If they symptoms went away

They still had to go to the priests

They had to offer sacrifices before being declared clean

For them, religion and society were so intertwined

You had to be rectified with both to resume normal life

So we have the leper in our Gospel

He hears about this man called Jesus

In his heart, he knows he can help him

So he decides to break all cultural rules

He comes into town

He comes up to Jesus, and kneels down

In Mark's Gospel, only 3 times is it recorded that one knelt in front of Jesus

The rich young man and the soldiers mocking him

So only once is it done in honesty

The leper sees that Jesus is not like other men

He knows that Jesus has the power to do anything

He begs: *if you will, you can make me clean*

He doesn't ask for healing

He asks to be made clean

It goes so far beyond a simple healing

It is a profession of faith

And Jesus responds to this profession of faith

Something he does so often in his public ministry

Jesus reaches out and touches the man

A human touch

Something the man has not experienced in such a long time

Ever since his affliction, he had been isolated

How many years had he desired something so simple?

Now he experiences Jesus' touch, and he hears these words:

I do will it, be made clean

The leprosy left him immediately

He was made clean

Then Jesus tells him

Tell no one

Go to the priests and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed

Jesus doesn't want to be known as a miracle worker

He wants to be known as the Messiah

He wants our hearts not our heads alone

In our 2nd reading we heard from St Paul

Whatever you do

Do everything for the glory of God

So Jesus sends the man to the high priest

So the High Priest might understand

It was not the law that cured this man

He was made clean by the power and grace of God

A power and grace made real in Jesus Christ

However, it is too much for the man

Off he goes

Publicizing the whole matter

Now, their roles change somewhat

It is Jesus who cannot enter into towns

It is Jesus who remains in the deserted places

But people kept seeking him

Even in the wilderness

In our world today, there is something more serious than leprosy

Leprosy is a physical disease

And as serious as it is

It can affect only the body

Serious sin is a spiritual leprosy

It isolates us from God

It can keep us from receiving the graces we need

We all are in need of being made clean

And Jesus Christ desires to give us that grace

In the sacraments of initiation

Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation

The sacraments of healing; Penance and Anointing

The sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders

These are how Jesus reaches through us

It is through the sacraments that we are made clean

It is in the sacraments that Jesus touches our hearts and souls

Did Jesus have to touch the man with leprosy?

Couldn't he have healed him by speaking a word?

Yes, but Jesus chose to touch him

And he chose to give us his Church

He chose to give us the Sacraments

If we reject them

We are rejecting Christ

Not because he couldn't save us by any other means

It is simply through the Church

Through the Sacraments is how Christ desires to touch our hearts

It is how he wants to make us clean

And this gives us our mission

Jesus did not give us His Church and the Sacraments for a private club

God desires the salvation of all His children

It is up to us who receive His Word

Who receive his body and blood

Who have been touched through his sacraments

It is up to us to be his messengers

To bring his light in a darkened world

Where will his invitation lead us?

When I hear these words in my heart

I do will it

Be made clean

Am I changed?