

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time – His Touch Changes Everything

**Mark 1:40-45**

### *Introduction*

Disease's like leprosy and the isolation that come with it can be found in many forms in our day. Poverty, abuse, physical or mental illness, addiction and illiteracy, are all maladies that cause suffering, rob individuals of self-respect, and result in the isolation of those afflicted. Many of us know the feeling of loneliness, and the loss of self-respect. Calling on God's healing touch can change everything... all we need to do is ask.

### *Gospel – Mark 1:40-45*

In the New Testament there was no disease regarded with more terror and pity than leprosy. No other disease reduces a human being over so many years to such a hideous a wreck. Primitive hygiene considered even temporary maladies as highly contagious, demanding strict isolation for the sufferer. The sufferer of such maladies was banished from fellowship, dwelling outside the camp. He or she was required to wear rags, with a bared head, and a cover over the upper lip so as not to spread the disease by mouth. The afflicted were required to warn others of their polluted presence with the cry, "Unclean, unclean!" The leper had not only to bear the physical pain of his disease; he or she also had to bear the mental anguish and the heart-break of being totally shunned. If ever a leper was cured – and real leprosy was incurable – he or she had to undergo an extremely complicated process to be restored to the community.

Today's Gospel provides us with a most revealing picture of Jesus. He does not drive a man away who has broken the law... It was against the law for the leper to even approach Jesus. But Jesus meets this desperate human being with understanding and compassion... He reaches out and touches him. He touches a man who was considered unclean... unworthy of human comfort. But to Jesus this man was not unclean; he was simply a human soul in desperate need. And in a single, simple touch, Jesus changes everything. Having cleansed this man, Jesus sends him back to the priests so that he can be

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time – His Touch Changes Everything

re-united with the community. Here we see compassion, power and wisdom bound together, in a simple touch.

### ***Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46***

In today's first reading we see that the determination of a diseases active or inactive state belonged to the priest. He exercised this function not as a physician but as a judge and an interpreter of the law. The Hebrews always regarded leprosy and any contagious disease as a punishment from God. But Jesus chooses not to function as a judge or an interpreter of the law but as the divine physician.

### ***I Corinthians 10:31-11:1***

Paul calls us to imitate the healing and compassionate Jesus. He sees that duty extending across several types of relationships... Towards ones enemies... towards those who were indifferent to Christianity... And finally to one's fellow Christians. We can only imitate the healing compassion of Christ when we remember the duty we have to our fellow man... no matter what his condition is... And we can only do that when we realize that our Christian freedom is not given to us for our own sake but for the sake of others. Especially the least among us... Those who suffer. It is our duty to reach out to others as Christ did... To touch them.

### ***Lent***

This Wednesday we begin the season of Lent. It is a time for us to experience God's healing touch and to extend that healing touch to others. We are called to imitate the healing compassion of Christ outlined in the Gospel and confirmed in Paul's letter to the Corinthians... *"To confront the diseases of our brothers and sisters, to touch them, to make them our own and to take practical steps to alleviate them."* (adapted from *Lenten Reflection* by Pope Francis 2014)

### ***Conclusion***

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time – His Touch Changes Everything

When Jesus touched the leper... his touch said “I love you just the way you are, and I am here to help you.” “I am here to alleviate your suffering.” Jesus entered the sufferer’s world. Jesus, the cleanest person in the entire crowd, did not fear defilement... He drew close. He touched this man without fear. And Jesus touches lives today! It makes no difference who you are, or what you may have done. You are not so bad as to be beyond His loving touch.

When Jesus suffered and died for our sins, He entered our suffering. He shares our pain. He dies on the cross taking our sins upon himself so that he might touch us and change us by His grace and power. This is what Jesus does when he touches a life! He gives the person he touches a new life instantly... literally making them new creatures. Let’s remember this as Lent begins...

His touch changes everything