

Sunday, February 15, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46

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

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

Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

The Power of the Cross to Cleanse Us of the Leprosy of Our Sins

The man ... began to publicize the whole matter. (Mark 1:45)

Have you ever watched a movie in which two characters trade places? Perhaps a mother and daughter mysteriously switch bodies. Or a pauper is mistaken for a prince. Usually, chaos ensues as the characters try to get used to their new roles.

In today's Gospel reading, another kind of switch occurs, only this time both characters are very comfortable in their new roles.

First, there's the man with leprosy. He had been living in a kind of exile from society because of his disease. But after Jesus heals him, he is set free from his isolation. He is so excited, in fact, that he spreads the news about Jesus far and wide.

Then there's Jesus. He had been at the center of a renewal movement in Galilee, a kind of toast of the town, visiting every synagogue he could and receiving a warm welcome wherever he went. But all this changed when he met the man with leprosy. As a result of his healing the man, Jesus is the one who has to stay in "deserted places" (Mark 1:45). By touching this man, Jesus took the man's uncleanness upon himself instead.

In a way, this switch is a foreshadowing of the cross. Jesus became an outsider, despised and rejected, so that we could become insiders in his heavenly kingdom. Can you imagine? First, the infinite and eternal God became a vulnerable, helpless baby. Then, throughout his life, he endured exclusion, misunderstanding, and ridicule. Only the purest, most sacrificial love could accept all of this for the sake of redeeming a people lost in sin.

Take a moment, and imagine Jesus standing before you. As he did with the leper, he wants to switch places with you. He wants to take your sin and your isolation. He wants to welcome you into his kingdom. Let him show you how much he loves you, accepts you, and rejoices over you.

"Lord, thank you for becoming an outsider so that I could be accepted."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. *The Word Among Us* Mass Edition contains all the Mass readings and prayers, and a meditation for each of the daily and Sunday Masses.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. The first reading describes Jewish laws concerning lepers. In addition to the suffering caused by the disease of leprosy, why did declaring a leper as unclean and having him “dwell apart” from the community make his suffering even worse? What more can you do as Christians to reach out to those who are sick and suffering?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, the psalmist speaks of being blessed, glad, rejoicing, and exalting in the Lord after confessing his sins. Why do you think this is even more true for us as Catholics?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul urges us to be an imitator of him as he is of Christ, so that many “may be saved.” What are some ways that Paul was an imitator of Christ? Why is the witness of our lives so important in drawing people to Christ and his Church? What are some areas of your life that may need to change so that others can see Christ in you in a clearer way?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus was “moved with pity” and healed a leper. How does Jesus’ reaching out and touching the leper also demonstrate his great compassion and love for him? What impact do you think this touch by Jesus had on the leper apart from the healing?
5. In the meditation, we hear these words regarding Jesus and the leper: “By touching this man, Jesus took the man’s uncleanness upon himself instead. In a way, this switch is a foreshadowing of the cross. Jesus became an outsider, despised and rejected, so that we could become insiders in his heavenly kingdom.” What is your reaction when you consider that out of his great love for you, Jesus’ took upon himself the leprosy of your sins and infirmities so that you could be made whole and clean?
6. Jesus’ love for us is not intended to be hoarded for ourselves, but to be given away. What are some ways you can share Jesus’ love? For example, by showing more love and affection to your wife, children, and other members of your family – even with those you may have some major issues.
7. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for what he did for you by dying on the cross. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]