

Such an unconditional love! that's the kind of love with which Jesus has treated each one of us. We may pray with the Psalmist today because ***I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.***

Jesus came, and he still comes, not to **condemn**, but to **save**.

But Let's always try to act daily as St. Paul exhorts us: ***"Whatever you eat, whatever you drink, whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of God"*** my actions, behaviour, attitude; are they approved by Jesus? What would Jesus do in this situation? are my actions according, in correspondence, in consonance with the gospel?

❖ Leprosy was one of the most feared (and most frequently encountered) diseases in ancient times.

Theologians and spiritual writers have always seen in this Old Testament conception of leprosy a **symbol of sin**.

- Sin is a kind of **spiritual** leprosy.
- It disfigures our **souls** and spreads into every corner of our lives.
- It destroys **us** and destroys our ability to **relate** to other people.
- It **cuts us off** from the purpose of our life and our role in human society and human history.
- Just as leprosy **starts small** but spreads and grows, so **one sin**, can easily become a **spark** that starts a **spiritual forest fire**.

And so, when Jesus reaches out and touches this leper, and **heals** him, it is much **more** than just another miracle.

It is a revelation of **Christ's entire mission**.

- He is the Redeemer, the Saviour; he is the one who comes into this fallen, **sin-infected world** and, with the power of his mercy and grace, **cleanses** it and gives it a **new start**.
- And he does the same thing **with each one of our lives**, as often as we need it.

❖ St Mark points out a **subtle detail** in this encounter that we should not overlook.

Jesus cured the leper **by touching him**.

- He didn't **have** to touch this leper; and in fact, it was **against Jewish law** to touch him.
- And yet, Jesus **does** touch him.
- He **makes a point** of touching him.
- Jesus goes **beyond** what is strictly **necessary**, because he wants to show us that his love is **super-abundant**.
- He knows that it is **hard for us to trust him**, to **come to him** with our wounds, sins, weaknesses, and failures.
- He **knows** it's hard for us, and so he **makes it easier**, by showing us that he is **so much bigger** than all of that.

None of our hidden leprosies surprise or repel him; he **knows** us too well; he loves us **too unconditionally**; with unconditional love.

- ❖ There is [another] detail about this encounter...
- St Mark tells us that the leper "**came to Jesus**," close enough to kneel in front of him.
- Everyone knew that the law **required** him to keep his distance...
- Something about Jesus must have inspired **confidence**.
- The leper must have sensed that Jesus wouldn't be **repulsed** by his disgusting disease. And the leper was right.
- Jesus touched him, and healed him - something **no one else** could do or would do.

Is that how **we** think of Jesus? Do **we** have that kind of confidence in Him?

- Jesus has chosen to stay **as close to us** as he was to that leper, by giving us the **Eucharist**.

He is inviting us to come up close to him, kneel down in front of him, and pour out all our miseries, hardships, confusions, and needs, praying the same beautiful prayer that this leper prayed: *"Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean, you can give me strength, you can give me light."*

And when we do that, do you think he will be less generous with us than he was with this poor leper?

❖ **Jesus himself** is our hope.

He dwells in every Christian heart, **redeeming** our fallen nature and **strengthening** us against evil influences.

In a few moments, he will come to us again in the **Holy Eucharist**, to **share his very life** with us.

When he does, let's say to him **that** we will treat **others** as Christ has treated **us**; it means with such unconditional love.

How is my faith in Jesus?

How has Jesus treated me?

How do I treat my brothers and sisters?

What kind of spiritual leprosy am I suffering in these moments?

