



Bible Study

Sixth Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

**St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes**
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“A leper came to him [and kneeling down] begged him and said, ‘If you wish, you can make me clean.’ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, ‘I do will it. Be made clean.’” Mk. 1:40-41 NABRE

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

TIME FOR A CLEAN-UP! You will not find the saying, “cleanliness is next to Godliness” in the Bible. Scholars confirm that it is a proverb of Babylonian and Hebrew origin. The scientist and philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, in his work Achievement of Learning (1605) wrote: “*Cleanness of the body was ever deemed to proceed from a due reverence to God.*” Years later in 1791, John Wesley referenced this proverb in its modern form.

In his homily on October 2, 2013, Pope Francis told those gathered in St. Peter’s Square, “*Do not be afraid of holiness, do not be afraid to aim high, to be loved and purified by God, do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit.*” In a sense, he told us that it is *time for a clean-up.*



If you wish, you can clean me up. Is physical cleanliness the same as spiritual cleanliness?

In Psalm 51:12, David sought a clean heart as a prerequisite for his continued service of God. As Christians, we too should seek cleanliness of mind and deed as a prerequisite for our continued service to God and mankind. In doing so, we comply with God’s command to be holy, as He is holy.

The Hebrews thought that cleanliness was next to Godliness, as the Book of Leviticus contains definitions of legal purity and impurity. This Sunday’s first reading, verses **1-2; 45-46**, concern leprosy, a detestable disease. It was the duty of the Levite, or priestly class, to determine the cleanness of the people. Aaron was the first Chief Priest of Israel and all his sons were associated in the priesthood. It was their duty to help the priests in the offering of sacrifices and other acts of divine worship. Any infectious skin diseases, including leprosy, made a person unfit to take part in religious rites (**vv 1-3**). To protect others, he/she was isolated until cured. Leprosy at that time had no cure. The isolation of a leper was complete. Not only was a leper isolated by the community, the leper had to isolate him/herself by appearance and warning others not to come near him. Such a person needed a cleanup. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Was leprosy a sign of physical impurity, only?

LEPER

There are several types of leprosy. Biblical leprosy was most likely a severe type of psoriasis, a form of the disease relatively rare in modern times.

Old Testament Law was quite detailed in its instructions regarding recognition and quarantine of leprosy persons. The Bible never implies that leprosy can be cured by non-miraculous means, even though it does contain guidelines for readmitting cured lepers into normal society.

The Old Testament contains no references to treatment or remedy. Jehoram's exclamation (2 Kings 5:7) implies the belief that leprosy could be cured only by a miracle. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

TIME FOR A CLEAN-UP! In many ways, St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians seems to be a call for them to clean up their Christian activities.

In Chapter 10, he warned against over confidence while assuring them that God is faithful. He assured them that their faith would be tested in this life. He warned against idolatry. There were pagan temples in Corinth which offered sacrifices to gods. The meat not burnt was often sold in the public market. Some Christians had concerns about eating such meat. St. Paul declared that meat sacrifices to idols were nothing but demon worship (**20-33**). Yet, he preached that God created all things and a person was free to eat what God has provided. But that freedom did not include idol worship. A person, therefore, should not eat such meat, if doing so prevented someone from following Christ. He encouraged them to work for the good of others and not personal advantage.

In verses **10:32** and **11:1**, St. Paul summed up his admonitions with the general rule of mutual responsibility. He offered himself as a model as he imitated Christ. This method, grounded in Jesus Christ, would assist both the Corinthians and us to clean up a spiritual mess. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Does Religious Freedom allow for the abuse of others?

Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

TIME FOR A CLEAN-UP! It has been said that God dances with the outcast. If this is true, then who are the "outcasts" today and where is God dancing these days? "Outcasts" today are those who we have cast out. We cast out people who are different because of religion, race, culture, gender, ethnicity or politics. We even make members of our own families "outcasts." We build walls costing millions of dollars to keep out those we don't like. If God dances with the "outcasts," we might be missing the divine dance. If we are not dancing with God's favorite dance partners, it is time for a cleanup. It is time for us to consider how we view others in light of our own religious freedom.

According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus cured all sorts of diseases and cast out many demons (Mk. 1:21-34). Because leprosy was a loathsome and incurable disease, the cure of the leper is perhaps one of the greatest miracles. There were only two instances in the Old Testament when God cured a leper (Num. 12:12-15 and 2 Kgs 5:1-14). The Gospel of Mark places this miracle in the first days of Jesus' ministry to demonstrate that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Perhaps the leper heard of Jesus' ministry of curing and casting out demons and he approached Jesus with hope and faith. He was isolated from worship, his family, and community. His faith system isolated him from God, as he was unclean to worship with the Chosen People. As the leper boldly approached Jesus, he violated Jewish law and risked further ostracism and humiliation. In reverence (Ps 22:30) and pleading (Ps 95:6), he knelt and asked Jesus to heal him, if He wishes to do so. This shows his faith in the power of Jesus to clean and heal. It also shows the leper's recognition of his need for a spiritual, as well as, a physical cleanup. Jesus was moved with compassion and stretched His hand and cured him (vv. 41-42). Jesus' power and holiness prevented His defilement. Jesus' stern warning and dismissal may be directed to the demon, rather than to the leper. His instructions for the leper to show himself to the priest shows Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament, not its destruction. Ironically, the inclusion of the leper into the community caused Jesus' exclusion, as he could not enter towns openly and was forced to go to deserted places, the places where the leper had been. Do you need a spiritual cleanup? **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Who do you consider as outcasts? How can you include them?

PRAY ABOUT IT!

Monday

Read 1 Corinthians 10:20. What does it mean to drink the cup of the Lord?

Tuesday

Visit someone who is sick or shut in.

Wednesday

Learn something about a different religion or Christian denomination.

Thursday

Read Psalm 95:6. How should you view changes in others?

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES THAT THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION CAN CLEAN YOU UP.

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."

Resources: The Gospel of Mark, The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition, Ignatius Press San Francisco CA, 2010; pp 66-69; 1 Corinthians, Catholic Study Bible, Ignatius Press 2010. San Francisco. CA. 2010, pp. 296-299; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year B, 2018, Brian Schmisk, Diana Macalintal and Jay Cormier, Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 55-58. Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-;The-Sunday-Readings,-Cycle-B,-Kevin-O'Sullivan,-O.F.M.-Franciscan-Herald-Press-1971,-pp-93-100;> The Gospel of Mark, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Mary Healy, Baker Academic, © 2008, pp. 4751-54. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-do-not-be-afraid-of-holiness>

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2014