6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

Leprosy was one of the most feared diseases of biblical times. This horribly contagious disease slowly ruined the body, and in most cases there was no cure. The Old Testament often used leprosy as an example of sin because sin also is contagious and destructive and leads to separation. Sin is a sore on our soul that festers and grows until it completely destroys the soul. We can get immediate help for the soul through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Sin is contagious and if let go unchecked, it will spread destruction and death wherever it goes.

1. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Aaron is Moses' older brother, the one who is Moses' spokesman and also the one who forged the golden calf while Moses was on the top of Mount Sinai. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, the people had convinced Aaron to represent them in their worship (the golden calf); now that Moses has returned, God has in essence said, "You want Aaron, you got him". He is the high priest in the post-golden calf time and must sacrifice a bull every time the enters the holy of holies, thus rejecting the bull idol which he had made.
2. "If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule or blotch These were normally symptoms of temporary disorders which were curable. Ordinary skin blotches, scabs resulting from boils or burns, scalp disorders, face eruptions, and baldness were not signs of impurity so long as they were devoid of infectious symptoms. which appears to be the sore of leprosy, he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his descendants. The necessity of approaching a priest was not to obtain medical information and advice, nor to find out whether he had leprosy or not, but to learn whether he was levitically clean or unclean, that is, was he clean enough to participate in any kind of religious service.

44. If the man is leprous and unclean, the priest shall declare him unclean The determination of the disease's active or inactive state belonged to the priest, who exercised his function not as a physician, for he offered no treatment, but as a judge and interpreter of the Law. His favorable decision was required before purification rites permitting re-entry into the community could be initiated. When a case was doubtful, a period of quarantine was imposed. by reason of the sore on his head. The disease of leprosy is always fatal unless it is treated. It is a bacterial disease that is slow in developing, sometimes taking even years. In nodular leprosy, the patient exhibits eruptions, which develop into nodules, which in turn become open sores. Anesthetic leprosy exhibits a degeneration of the nerves, loss of extremities (the fingers, then hands and arms fall off). There is also the mixed type, which exhibits both sets of symptoms. Leprosy was widely held as being a punishment for some sin.
45. The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his garments rent and his head bare, The garments were rent by slitting the front and laying bare the breast. The person had to leave his head uncovered which permitted the elements to work their whim upon it, giving him a wild, uncivilized appearance. and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!'
46. As long as the sore is on him he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp." Because

leprosy was an infectious disease, every effort had to be made to keep it from spreading. A person with leprosy had to live in settlements or camps away from towns. When traveling about, he had to warn people he was coming by shouting to show he was unclean; he wore his clothes torn, beard covered, and hair uncombed. All this was meant to make him stand out so that people could avoid him easily.

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

In this passage, Paul is responding to those who were worried about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Our behavior towards others is more important than what we eat or drink.

Brothers and sisters,

31. whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.
    In everything you do, even in apparently unimportant things, like eating and drinking, a Christian should seek the glory of God by always acting with the best of intentions. In the case of meals, the practice of saying grace before and after helps us to be mindful of God in that situation. St. Basil comments that "When you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking him for being so generous to you. If you drink wine, be mindful of him who has given it to you for your pleasure and as a relief in sickness. When you dress, thank him for his kindness in providing you with clothes. When you look at the sky and the beauty of the stars, throw yourself at God's feet and adore him who in his wisdom has arranged things in this way. Similarly, when the sun goes down and when it rises, when you are asleep or awake, give thanks to God, who created and arranged all things for your benefit, to have you know, love and praise their Creator."
32. Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or the church of God, This means to do nothing that would be an obstacle to the conversion of the Jews or the Greeks nor to the growth and edification of the Church. Remember that we may be the only bible some people will ever read! Throughout this section Paul subordinates Christian freedom to Christian love, emphasizing that genuine charity builds up and does not insist on its own way. There are many things that a man may do with perfect safety as far as he himself is concerned but if that thing is going to be a stumbling block to someone else he must not do it. Each person is morally responsible not only for their own actions, but also for the influence their behavior has on the good or bad actions of others.
33. just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they may be saved.

1. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. St. Paul proposes himself as a model because by imitating his life and following in his footsteps we are following those of Christ, who is our only proper model. The same applies to all other saints: their lives teach us to practice the Christian virtues. God shows his presence and his face in these saints who are more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ.

Mark 1:40-45

40. A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." This man knelt down as a sign of humility and shame to teach us to be ashamed of the stains of our lives. He acknowledged his wound and begged for healing. He recognized that the Lord had the power to heal him. Because leprosy was looked on as a chastisement inflicted by God for certain sins, it was considered an impurity even more than a sickness and we find the leper of this narrative asking to be cleansed rather than cured.
41. Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, No person is too disgusting physically, emotionally or spiritually for Jesus to touch. The touching of the leper indicated that our Lord did not fear contagion and that he was not bound by the Law which forbade contact with the unclean. and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." Leprosy was seen as a punishment from God and the disappearance of the disease was regarded as one of the blessings of the messianic times. Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God which is the third Luminous mystery of the Rosary under the title of "The Proclamation of the Kingdom".
42. The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Leprosy was a skin disease that made victims unclean, that is, unfit to participate in the liturgical life of Israel. Jesus reached out and touched the leper and though others would be defiled by such contact, he conquered the uncleanness by the greater power of his holiness. St John Chrysostom commented that Jesus touched the leper to signify that he heals not as servant but as Lord.
43. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once.
44. He said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, Jesus frequently calls for silence from both demons and men to conceal his identity as the Messiah. There were probably several reasons for this: 1) Jesus wanted to avoid a sensationalist reputation of being no more than a wonder-worker. Publicizing his deeds by word of mouth comes with the danger that rumors will begin to disconnect his miracles from his saving message. 2) He wanted to sidestep popular expectations that the Messiah would be a political and military leader. 3) He did not wish to ignite the wrath of his enemies before the appointed time of his Passion. but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; The Mosaic Law required Levitical priests to inspect lepers and determine their status as clean or unclean. With approval, an individual pronounced clean would offer sacrifices at the Temple in order to be reinstated in the community of Israel. that will be proof for them." This probably refers to the priests who will have to face the fact that what was recorded only twice in the Old Testament (Num. 12:10 and 2 Kings 5:1) and what rabbinical tradition considered to be as difficult as raising the dead—namely, the healing of a leper—has happened at the touch of Jesus of Nazareth.
45. The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. This leper's inability to keep the secret is a way of showing us how great the secret is! He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. The kingdom that Christ brings is one in which all are healed and are called to be healers. To be his disciple is not to be free of wounds and scars, but to be, like him,

a wounded healer. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (2) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (3) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (4) "The Book Of Leviticus" by Geron G. Fournelle, O.F.M., (5) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (6) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (7) "The Letters To The Corinthians" by William Barclay, (8) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (9) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Aelred R. Rosser, (10) "The Navarre Bible: St. Mark," (11) "Mark: Good News for Hard Times" by George T. Montague, S.M., (12) "The Sunday Epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, (13) "The New Rosary In Scripture" by Edward Sri, and (14) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.