

JESUS CHRIST BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN US AND GOD AND AMONG OURSELVES

The first reading and Gospel today present how leprosy separated some people from others during Jesus' time. During Jesus' time, there was a regulation as we heard in the first reading today which prevented people suffering leprosy from associating with the rest of the people who were not suffering leprosy (Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46). Those suffering from leprosy were mandated to live apart from the rest of the people and to shout "unclean" to deter others from coming close to them. Think about the CDC regulations during the recent pandemic. During the recent pandemic, COVID-19 victims were asked to quarantine themselves. People were advised to observe social distancing. People were forced into living in isolation. What frustrated some people the most during the pandemic included the lockdown, wearing of face masks, quarantine, and ban on social gatherings. ALL THESE REGULATIONS WERE MADE WITH GOOD INTENTIONS FOR THE COMMON GOOD BUT THEY SEPARATED PEOPLE FROM EACH OTHER. We are social beings; God created us to relate well with each other and we fulfill God's purpose for creating us through our relationships with others. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus reached out to a leper who needed and asked for His help (Mark 1:40-45). Jesus touched the leper and healed him. Jesus must have been the only person who touched or associated with the leper since he started suffering leprosy. Jesus made him feel accepted and cherished. Some people have committed suicide because they felt rejected by society. We are not encouraged to physically touch those with communicable diseases if we are in danger of being infected with the diseases by our physical touch. We can touch others through our kindness, respect, pity, compassion, and love. Jesus was moved with pity which made Him give the leper a healing touch. Jesus healed the man of his bodily sickness, that is, leprosy, and emotional sickness, that is, feelings of rejection. "Our Gospel is not just about leprosy-it is also about compassion, about having a faith great enough to ask Jesus to also heal us and about asking Jesus to help us recognize and welcome the outcasts, to touch the untouchable and to love the unlovable" (Fr. Jerry). JESUS POINTS OUT TODAY THAT SHOWING LOVE OR COMPASSION TO OTHERS IS THE SECOND GREATEST OF ALL LAWS OR REGULATIONS. What distances us from God and others the way leprosy distanced some people from others during Jesus' time? Sin distances us from God but Jesus has defeated sin through His paschal mystery. Jesus has made it possible for us to be easily forgiven when we sin. Now, sin brings us closer to God when we seek God's forgiveness. At present, pride, discrimination, social status, injustice, and ignorance, make some people distance themselves from others. What makes us feel that we are better than others and that we should not associate or socialize with them? Our world is divided into many groups. I strongly believe in this maxim: "United we stand and divided we fall." There can never be peace in the world with these divisions. In the world now, some people think they know better than others, a few people think they are superior to others, some others think they are holier than others, and so forth. Some members of these groups think that those who do not belong to their groups are inferior and have nothing to contribute to the common good. Everyone is as important as the rest of the people. JESUS BRIDGED THE GAPS AMONG US BY ASSOCIATING OR SOCIALIZING WITH EVERYONE AND BY COMMANDING US TO LOVE EVERYONE. Jesus showed love to everyone without discrimination. Jesus associated with the rich, poor, young, old, male, female, sinners, righteous, healthy, sick, and so forth. In the Gospel according to John 17:21-24, Jesus prayed for our unity or oneness. Our unity as Christians lies in

living according to the Gospel message. Jesus is a great healer. May we ask Him to heal all the broken marriages or families or relationships, divisions, and sicknesses in our parishes and the world. PEACE BE WITH YOU.