



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Image by Christine Sponchia from Pixabay

"LORD, IF YOU WISH, YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN"

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

From Today's Gospel

When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

MATTHEW 8:1-4

Reflection

In the Gospel according to Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount leads into the section that gathers stories of Jesus healing all kinds of illnesses. The first person to be cured is a man who has leprosy. Jesus had just instructed his

disciples to do the will of God (7:21), and now he enacts God's will to heal -- especially the marginalized people in society represented here by the outcast leper. In Leviticus 13-14 there are detailed instructions about dealing with leprosy (a term that applied to several kinds of skin ailments). Committed to fulfilling the Law, Jesus sends the healed man to complete the ritual for reincorporation into the faith community, i.e., "show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed." The detail about secrecy/"tell no one" may be a subtle way of directing the healed man not to delay going to the priests. He may be tempted to spend time telling his story of being cured rather than fulfilling the final ritual and *then* telling his story.

This healing begins with the initiative of the leper who approaches Jesus not with a request, but with a statement that places the power of healing in the heart of Jesus: ". . . if you wish, you can make me clean." Healing is not automatic, it is gift . . . coming from Divine desire for wholeness.



Person cleaning hands
Photo by Samad Delda

For Pondering

- What experiences of healing have you had? Or been a witness to? Remembering them now, in what ways have they affected your relationship with God? With other people? With illness in general?
 - Imagine having a conversation with the leper before his healing experience and then after his healing experience. What do you learn?
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For Prayer

*Creator
God of wholeness,
God of healing,
accept our prayers;
send a special blessing
to all we know
who are in need of your healing.
Amen.*

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