

February 11, 2024



WHEN NEED MEETS COMPASSION

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

*A leper came to Jesus 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."*

MARK 1:40-41

Reflection

This is the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. In my experience, there has been nothing ordinary about the days over the last month. It seems I am back in the fast lane of ministry that speeds on in a blur of encounters, projects, requests for service. Wednesday begins the Lenten Season of conversion, reflection, and hope for transformation.

The readings today reflect the press of people in need of compassionate listening and a merciful response. Both the Hebrew Testament and the Gospel tell of men suffering from leprosy. There is no more isolating and painful reality for those afflicted.

Yet there are inner wounds, hardships, and personal struggles that afflict us all. Suffering is a common human experience, especially when the circumstance isolates and alienates a person. Often people choose to suffer silently, thinking they are alone in their misery. Yet the leper who courageously and humbly brought his inner and outer reality to Jesus opens our own hearts to hope in the loving mercy of God.

The readings today seem strategically placed in the lectionary, as they give witness to the possibility of healing, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness from Jesus and from our God who is Love. Human vulnerability and suffering come in many forms, whether physical, psychological, or spiritual; it is the human reality. There are those who greatly suffer from violence, oppression, physical illness, and the pain of being ignored and discounted here and now and in the global community.

As I ponder the Gospel excerpt, I am invited to open my heart and also reflect on my own need for healing, my own desire for wholeness, my own very real challenges and struggles as well as those in the people I encounter daily at home and abroad.

I ask, what is my capacity for compassionate response? Realizing we are one in the human condition, I too must be willing to break free from my façade that all is well, name my own need for conversion and, like the man in the Gospel, seek out Jesus and trust that he has the power to heal, renewal, change me and my dear neighbor.

In hope, let us humbly ask for necessary healing and transform of our inner and outer life. A good thought to shape my upcoming Lenten journey.



Dirt Path
Photo by Sr. Jane DeLisle

For Pondering

- What is my capacity for compassion for those who suffer or struggle?

- What does my own inner landscape reveal to me about my own need for conversion?
 - How have I been cared for, healed, renewed by God who is my hope?
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For Prayer

*Gracious Son of God,
You came to forgive the afflicted of body and of heart.
I praise and thank you for your love that stirs up hope in me for healing.
Please, heal my own heart.
Heal, my Lord Jesus, those intimate wounds
that cause me physical illness, or psychological strife,
and spiritual blindness.
I bring to you my heart and soul.
Accept it, Lord, purify it and make my heart like your own Divine Heart.*

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