

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Healing God,
there are many people
who need our friendship,
sick people, lonely people,
people we do not like.
Put in our hearts
a real love for them.
We make this prayer to you
through Jesus, your Son.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The primary focus of these readings would be difficult to present to children. Namely, that leprosy symbolizes sin (clearly indicated in both the Old and New Testaments) and that Jesus has the power to forgive sin. We can easily move, however, to a secondary, though not less important, focus.

All disease, illness, and especially those as severe as leprosy, are dreaded by human beings. Jesus reveals that he has the power to heal these and that he indeed wants to. Jesus, in his compassion, "reached out and touched" a man with leprosy, a man who, by the standard of the time, was untouchable. This was not a demonstration against the law. It was an act of genuine love, "I do want to." At the same time, Jesus reveals his power, "you are cured right now." This is in striking contrast to the rejection and inability to heal evident in the reading from Deuteronomy. This Gospel focuses on the compassion and the power of Jesus.

FIRST READING: *Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46*

This is a reading from the book of Leviticus.

It is written in the law:

People who have a scab or an open sore on their skin and it becomes leprosy, must be brought to one of the priests.

The priest must tell them that they are "unclean," because anyone with leprosy is considered unclean by the law.

Those who have leprosy must wear torn clothes and must keep their heads covered.

They must live outside the camp, away from the other people.

When they come into the town, they must shout out loud,

"Unclean! Unclean!"

They will be considered unclean as long as they have the disease of leprosy.

This is the Word of God.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 31*

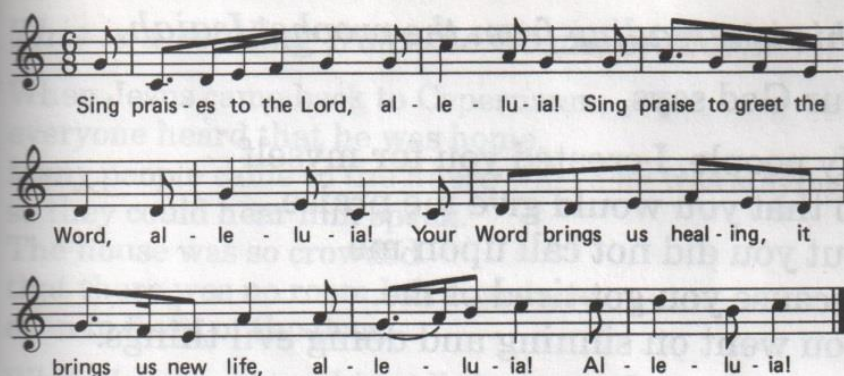
RESPONSE:

My God, my God, have mer - cy on me, for
all my hope is in you, my God, all my hope is in you.

VERSES:

1. You see I am in trou - ble, you know what makes me sad.
2. O God, you are my strength, — my life is in your hands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *Mark 1:40-45*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Mark.

One day a man who had leprosy came to Jesus because he wanted Jesus to heal him. He knelt in front of Jesus and said,

“If you want to, you can cure me.”

Jesus felt very sorry for the man and so he reached out and touched him, and said,

“I do want to cure you.

You are cured right now.”

The man was cured of his leprosy immediately.

Then Jesus warned the man, saying,

“Now don’t tell anyone about this.

But go and show yourself to the priest as Moses said.

And make an offering

because you have been cured.”

But instead, the man went away and began to tell everyone what happened. Because of this,

Jesus was not able to go into any town without being noticed by everyone.

So he stayed outside of the towns, but people still kept coming from everywhere to see him.

This is the Good News of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

It will not be necessary to dwell on “the law” with regard to leprosy. It is sufficient just to make clear to the children that leprosy was a dreaded disease and that those who had it were not permitted to live in the towns. People were afraid of lepers and certainly would not touch them. Explain to children that because the people did not understand leprosy (or most illnesses) they often thought it was a punishment for sin.

After the Gospel, ask the children to recall the story. In particular, help them to recall the compassion of Jesus. It is important that they recall that Jesus

- felt sorry for the leper,
- that he touched him (though to others he was an outcast),
- that he truly wanted to heal him.

Ask the children if they have ever experienced being left out or have felt alone and unwanted. Who “brought them back”? Who helped them feel better? How did that person do that? When someone forgives or tells you you are loved, does it help if they put their arms around you or if they touch you gently? Help the children see that the way Jesus treats people is as important as his miracles.

Without moralizing, we can help children see that often our gentleness, our kindness, our attention or our touch is all someone really needs or wants.