

Fr. Rudy's Reflections

The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 11, 2024

The Healing Touch

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

"I see God in every human being. When I wash the leper's wounds, I feel I am nursing the Lord himself. Is it not a beautiful experience?"—St. Teresa of Calcutta

It seems in a blink of an eye, in 2020, the world transformed itself from a connected, global society to one unrecognizable—isolated, fearful, and with a hands-off approach to our fellow man. We were concerned primarily about ourselves, not knowing whether someone we came in contact with could transmit this dreaded disease and possibly kill us, or at least make us deathly ill. In a sense, we treated each other as lepers and adopted a run-for-cover approach with everyone we encountered. We no longer hugged, kissed, shook hands in greeting, or even looked someone in the eye. Germs were everywhere, we surmised, and paper masks became our sought-after accessory. And this epidemic somehow changed our hearts as well, as even today, we hesitate to reach out and connect with another person in fear of its end result. But one cannot be fully alive without relationships with other people. God asks us to love, to be unified in *giving and receiving*, so we can more fully unite with him. We must find a way back into each other's lives once again.

It is the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, and today, as we complete the first chapter of Mark, our Gospel describes, in all six verses, Jesus's encounter with a leper whom he cured in an instant but by challenging the constraints of religious authorities in doing so. Lepers, or even those with serious skin disorders, were considered "unclean" and were isolated from Jewish society causing great physical and emotional hardship to those afflicted. "Moved with pity, [Jesus] stretched out his hand, and touched him" (Mark 1:41). What powerful words to show us that human, empathetic touch is an essential component of compassion and a way to bridge a connection between us all! Broken and suffering souls in this unclean world can certainly be eased if we extend our hands and hearts in response to its outcry. Words matter, but so do the simple acts of kindness.

As we also celebrate today the World Day of the Sick, an annual observance that recognizes and raises awareness about the importance of providing care and support to individuals who are ill, particularly those facing chronic or severe health challenges, let us remember them in our prayers and good intentions.

"In order to be 'imitators of Christ' in the face of a poor or sick person, we must not be afraid to look him in the eye and to draw near with tenderness and compassion. . .Think about this: how do you help? From a distance or with tenderness, with closeness? If evil is contagious, so is goodness. Therefore, there needs to be ever more abundant goodness in us. Let us be infected by goodness and let us spread goodness!"—Pope Francis

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Rudy