

**DEACON TONY'S HOMILY
FOR THE
SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

This is a good time to discuss the disease of leprosy, better known today as Hansen's Disease, and the ways it was handled by the people of Jesus time.

In our first reading in Leviticus Moses writes instructions on how the priests were to handle leprosy cases. The book of Leviticus was a manual for priests and it contained many rules to handling life's problems. As we see, if the sore even appears to be leprosy, many drastic measures are prescribed for the priest.

The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall rent his garment and keep it rent. People rented their garment at times of death, apostasy of a family member which was considered a spiritual death, blasphemy (irreverence of God), etc.

He must cry out "UNCLEAN, UNCLEAN" if anyone approaches. He must dwell apart outside the camp. Today there are times, during the pandemic, when we are fearful of touching people and keeping our distance.

So, what example does Jesus give us as He is confronted by a leper. He sees a man who is going through a living hell and carrying his cross by himself. Jesus hears his profession of faith in Jesus and has pity on him. The first thing Jesus does is TOUCH the man. That touch must have felt so wonderful. It transmitted acceptance; something the leper hadn't felt in a long time.

St. Francis had a fear and abhorrence of lepers. One day, however, he met a man afflicted with leprosy while riding his horse near Assisi. Though the sight of the leper filled him with horror and disgust, Francis got off his horse and kissed the leper. Then the leper put out his hand, hoping to receive something. Out of compassion, Francis gave money to the leper.

But when Francis mounted his horse again and looked all around, he could not see the leper anywhere. It dawned on him that it was Jesus whom he had just kissed. Jesus frees us from the burdens and crosses we carry around with us if we ask Him. He freed the leper and freed St Francis from his fears. We Catholics have a perfect remedy for our burdens. It is known as CONFESSION. We bring our sins and burdens to the feet of Jesus who is represented by the priest. We are instructed to leave them at the confessional for our sins no longer exist. Yes, our God not only forgives but He forgets.