

Homily for the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 13-14, 2021

Readings: Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46; 1 Corinthians 10: 31-11:1; Mark 1: 40-45

Preacher: Cathy Kamp

Healing with a caring touch is a hallmark of the ministry of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law by offering her his hand, and in this week's Gospel, he touches the leper and makes him clean. While we may or may not be suffering from illness like Peter's mother-in-law or the leper, there is no doubt that each of us can be lifted up and made clean when we seek the loving, healing touch of our Lord.

As the pandemic rages on and so many of us face fear of illness and confusion in seeking vaccination, the healing touch of Jesus comes in many forms. There may be days when, like the psalmist, we pray, "I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble." We are indeed in a time of trouble. There is no script for how each of us is supposed to react to this challenging moment in time.

Some are enjoying solitude; some are terribly lonely. Some are rising to the occasion with creativity and flexibility; some lament not being able to return to normal. Some are full of anxiety and frustration; some are finding peace with more time for prayer and God. Some are fearful about themselves or a loved one getting COVID-19; some are brave and working on the front lines, sacrificing their own safety for others. But these are not binary scenarios. Most of us have likely experienced a bit of each of these human realities at one time or another in the past year: times of solace and times of despair, times of positive energy and times of defeat. I know I have! It's all human. There is no normal.

Where is the healing touch of Jesus for us in our coronavirus reality? How is Jesus reaching out to take our hands? When is Jesus stretching out his hand to touch us?

The healing love of Jesus can be seen every day, even in the most unfortunate circumstances. It is up to us to take the time to see God in our day-to-day

realities, and it is up to us to realize that we cannot go it alone. The upcoming Lenten season provides Christians with so many ways to reflect, to pray, and to take action.

Throughout our history, Catholics have been encouraged during Lent to enter into the solitude of Jesus' 40 days in the desert. This year, can we do this more intentionally? Can we take Jesus' hand and prayerfully embrace this journey as a time to unite ourselves with the Lord who was tempted to give in to his human weakness?

Our parish communities are ready to assist us in connecting with the love of Jesus. Many parishes are offering creative, safe ways to study Holy Scripture or areas of Catholic teaching. Some, like St. Joseph's, are focusing on the Year of St. Joseph and Consecration to St. Joseph. Stations of the Cross, which immerse us in the human suffering and death of Jesus, are still viable in person or online, for adults and young people. Virtual prayer services are being live-streamed, just as the celebration of daily and weekend Masses continues to be available online.

Our Diocese again affirms its commitment to Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl, giving us a way to fight global hunger and malnutrition. Most local food pantries also are in dire need of staples right now—we can organize non-perishable food drives in our parishes or right in our neighborhoods. Most of all, those living in poverty need our prayers. Can you take time each day to pray for those who are food-insecure, at risk of homelessness or living on the streets in this brutal weather?

As we enter into the 2021 Lenten season, may we also be mindful of where we each need the healing touch of Jesus. Maybe we could pray that Jesus would touch those parts of us that remain anxious or frustrated or fearful. When, like the leper, we ask Jesus to make us clean and free us of these negative, burdensome ways of thinking, we can be confident that Jesus does will it for us. Jesus will offer us his hand. Jesus will stretch out his arm and touch us. We will be healed in mind and spirit, ready to extend that same healing to those around us.

Let us ask ourselves: What in me needs healing? Who moves me with pity and needs me to reach out and offer the healing love of Jesus?