Sunday 6th (B) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 1:40-45): A leper came to him 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.” The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.” The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

“If you so wish, you can make me clean”

Fr. Ferran JARABO i Carbonell
(Agullana, Girona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel invites us to contemplate the faith of this leper. We know that, in the times of Jesus, lepers were socially marginalized and considered impure. The healing of the leper foretells the salvation that Jesus proposes to everyone, and calls us to open our hearts so that He can transform them.

The sequence of events is clear. First, the leper asks for healing and professes his faith: "If you wish, you can make me clean" (Mk 1:40). Secondly, Jesus - who literally surrenders to our faith - heals him ("I do will it. Be made clean"). Third, Jesus instructs the leper to submit to the prescriptions of the law, while also asking for silence. However, finally, the leper feels compelled to tell others what happened, and therefore "began to publicize the whole matter" (Mk 1:45). The man disobeys Jesus's last instruction, but his encounter with the Savior provokes a feeling that cannot be silenced.

Our lives are similar to the leper's life. Sometimes, due to sin, we find ourselves separated from God and the community. But this Gospel passage encourages us by offering a model: to profess our complete faith in Jesus, to completely open our hearts to him, and, once cleansed by the Spirit, to proclaim everywhere that we have met the Lord. This is the effect of the sacrament of Reconciliation, the sacrament of joy.

As Saint Anselm rightly says: "The soul must forget itself and remain wholly in Jesus Christ, who died to make us die to sin, and has risen to make us rise for the works of righteousness." Jesus wants us to walk the path with Him, He wants to clean us. How do we respond? We must go to meet Him with the humility of the leper and let Him help us reject sin, and to live in His Righteousness.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The love of Christ stimulates and urges us to run and to fly with the wings of holy zeal. And, if one does not have zeal, it is a sure sign that in his heart the flame of love and charity is extinguished.” (Saint Anthony Mary Claret)

- “In his Passion Jesus will become as a leper, made impure by our sins, to obtain for us forgiveness and salvation.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus often draws apart to pray in solitude, on a mountain, preferably at night. He includes all men in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2602)