

February 11, 2018 – 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Cycle B
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed!

Today when we listen to the readings, we begin with leprosy. The first reading and the gospel deals with lepers and what you need to do with them. Now, remember leprosy was not only a disease that killed you but it was a disease that isolated you, that separated you from your friends and your family members. Once you got leprosy, you were condemned to be alone. You were sent out, away. Again, to make the insult even worse, if someone came to you or if they came by you, you would have to cry out to them, “Unclean, unclean” and then they would run away from you. So for a moment, just try to get into the mindset of what it was to be a leper; what it was to feel leprosy. Then you get to Jesus and here’s a leper that doesn’t cry out to Jesus “unclean, unclean” but goes to Jesus. That means he felt comfortable enough that Jesus would not reject him or chase him away as 99% of other people would do. He makes this act of faith: “If you will it, you can make me clean”. Then Jesus says, “I do will it”, reached out His hand and touched him and He wasn’t afraid of the flu. He reached out His hand and touched him and brought him healing. So, here Jesus goes out of His way and makes sure that He heals this person not only physically but He heals him of all the loneliness and all the pain that he felt.

This same Jesus is here today and this same Jesus can reach out and bring healing to us. Heal us from our leprosy of loneliness, our leprosy of isolation, of our leprosy of whatever it happens to be – we all have some kind. If we make this act of faith, this same Jesus will touch us and how will He touch us today – in the Eucharist. Right? He’ll more than just touch us, He’ll come into us and the power of Him makes us one. The Eucharist is the one that takes away that leprosy, makes us all one, that stops isolation and brings us to community; that stops loneliness and brings us to love. The biggest thing about Jesus if that this person had to feel that he would not offend Jesus, now would he? Most of us would be. Are you kidding me, Father said don’t touch me so don’t touch me or whatever that happens to be. How easily we get offended.

Again as I’ve told you before years ago if you haven’t read the book “Unoffendable”, I encourage you to do so. Here’s what St. Paul says today, St. Paul says, “My brothers and sisters whatever you eat or drink, do everything for the glory of God”. We can all handle that. But then he says, “Avoid giving offense whether to the Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God. Just as I try to please to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many so that” (we heard again, the same reason He did it last week. Why does He do these things?) “So that others may be saved.”

So he says, I want others to be saved so I want you to do is don’t you be offendable. Don’t offend anybody. Now I hate this myself. When I was reading, I said, “Oh, go stop it” because that’s my stick, right? Every time I preach I offend somebody, that’s the reality. You know, I just got done with a mission: standing room, packed every night by God’s grace down in Louisiana. But, to sit there and not say anything negative? That’s what it is often to be offensive is we are negative people. We all become that way. We

do it online, constantly. We do it in how we talk, constantly. We do it in our gossip. We do it in our distraction. We do it in our preaching.

This is what I encourage us to do, what the Lord has put into my heart for Lent. Lent is Wednesday, right? You've all picked stuff already, right? No! So you sat there and you're asking Jesus what He wants you to do instead of what you've always done. So I want you to listen to your pastor for a change. You can do those other things but I want you to add that you and I will say nothing negative for all of Lent. Yeah – here we go! Yeah, you didn't like that one did you? All of us will say nothing negative to our families, to our friends, online. Boy, if you would just shut up online. Everybody here should give up Facebook unless you say something nice. If you don't say something nice once on Facebook during Lent, you're forbidden to go on it for the rest of Lent. Do you understand that? That means you don't go anything against the President. You don't go anything against the Right to Life people. You don't go against anything for any reason – you pagans. Nothing negative for Lent – I said that negatively, I know. But the reality is that we've got to sit there and stop doing this stuff.

If we stop being negative, maybe we'll bring more people to Jesus. I'll bet you we would. I'll bet you nobody comes to Jesus because we were negative with them. I'll bet you that. I'll bet you nobody comes to Jesus because we posted stuff online that we all agree with that we make people mad. I'll bet you no one comes to Jesus because of that - I'm just saying. I'll bet you if we stop being negative, it will bring us closer to our families when we don't say something negative to them every day. I'll bet you it will bring us closer. It will get rid of our isolation. It will get rid of our righteousness. It will get rid of our judgementalness.

So, I don't think it's gonna be possible for me. Pray for me – good – but we're gonna all try this together. Why – because what St. Paul says, "that others would be saved". So, let's forget about ourselves this Lent and let's try to get rid of negativity from our hearts, from our lives, from our words, from our internet use and see what happens.

You got it? You get it? You gonna do it? Don't you lie to your pastor! May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.