

Homily Sunday28-C6

The story of the healing of the ten lepers is an interesting one, full of meaning. I would like to point out in particular how Jesus delivers these ten lepers from a stigma, which is based on a lie. Those who were suffering from leprosy were considered as being punished by God with this terrible illness, because either they or their parents or ancestors had committed some kind of serious sin, and in addition to this they had to leave their loved ones and live in isolation, in groups. They also became gradually disfigured due to the flesh and bone eating bacteria that caused this terrible illness.

Burdened with a strong sense of guilt they cried out to Jesus to have pity on them. Notice that they didn't ask for healing, but merely for God's mercy. Jesus doesn't say to them 'be healed!', but He simply says: 'Go and show yourselves to the priests!' They were only healed as they were leaving. This was a strong indication that God had pity on them, but only the Samaritan got this very important message, because he was the only one who turned back to give thanks to Jesus. The other nine were probably just happy for their physical healing. Since the Samaritan thanked God for His mercy He was healed in two ways, completely; both physically like the other nine, and in addition spiritually as well: he was delivered from his sense of guilt which was very obvious from the fact that he praised God from the top of His voice. **It is very important to note that physical miracles themselves are not as important as spiritual healing, because physical healing doesn't necessarily result in spiritual healing. See the many people who both saw and experienced Jesus' miracles and also condemned Him to death, because they were told lies by their leaders.**

Our thinking can be full of lies, about various things, about others, about ourselves. These various forms of lies enter into our thinking mainly through our vulnerabilities. In the case of leprosy, the leprosy bacteria enters the body through cut wounds. Lies about ourselves enter our thinking through misunderstandings, which are usually the results of some kind of vulnerability in us which we may not be aware of; for example a mobile phone can be a vulnerable point nowadays, when you become too dependent on it. When I was in Spain earlier this year the parish mobile phone was with me and it was stolen from my pocket in a metro station in Barcelona. I felt quite vulnerable without my phone, and also felt angry with myself and with the man who stole my phone. The lie was that the phone was very important and that I should feel unhappy without it. I

decided to pray to Jesus to take away from me this anger and this lie. Thanks God, not long before this happened I read the book of Neal Lozano, called 'Unbound' which is about the five keys that help us to be free from sinful influences and attitudes. I used the five keys of freedom which Neal Lozano teaches about in this book and it took about two days and repeated prayers until I completely calmed down inside and felt surprisingly at peace within myself for the rest of my holidays. *So my leprosy was this strong sense of anger and frustration that seemed impossible to get rid of. But Jesus freed me from it when I used the five keys of freedom. This was the leper's cry in me to Jesus to have pity on me.*

Then eventually *my anger and frustration/ I* turned into thanksgiving and praise songs which I sang along with praise and worship singers on my laptop computer, which I took with me on that holiday.

So what is important is that Jesus deeply desires to free us from anything sinful, any lies, any depression, negative self-image, etc. that keep us in a bondage of sin. These are our leprosy, our real chains, and not any physical restrictions. Just as St. Paul wrote in the second reading: 'I have my own hardships to bear, even to being chained like a criminal – but they cannot chain up God's news', and God's news is that He deeply desires to set each one of us free from our sinful habits and thinking, in order to live like His beloved children. It is your decision whether you believe that Jesus can set you free from something that seems impossible to get rid of. Remember what Jesus says to the Samaritan in the Gospel reading: 'your faith has saved you.'

This afternoon (on the 13th October, from 3.30pm onward) we will have the opportunity to learn about the ways Jesus sets people free through the conference which our guests from Poland will present at Sacred Heart Church.