

SIX SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME FEB. 14, 021.

Some years back, when I was at St. John the Evangelist church, on a Saturday morning I heard the First Confession of a Second Grade Class. Sunday morning after Mass one of them, little Ashly, came into the sacristy and said, "Father, that was so much fun yesterday I cannot wait until I can go again." Then the little Ashly headed for the door and over her shoulder she said, "But first I have to go out and sin!" I let out a yell, Ashly! Come back here! We have to talk!"

Both Ashly and the man in today's Gospel were healed of leprosy. The man was healed of physical disease; Ashly was healed of a spiritual disease, namely sin.

Both of them could not contain their JOY! They went out and spread the Good News of what Jesus had done for them.

Both were healed and in turn became healers themselves. As the last line of Today's Gospel tells us, "People kept coming to him from everywhere." All because of their testimony.

That is the lesson we can all take home from today's scripture: **"Be healed and be healers!"**

Like those people in today's first reading who are shouting, "Unclean, Unclean," we too can shout out the same thing – "Unclean, Unclean." Why? Because we all have **Leprosy of the Soul!** It is called **Sin**.

The Good News is Jesus wants to be our savior. The News is Jesus loves sinners and is all Merciful. The Good News is as our Psalm Response proclaims, "I turn to you, Lord, in the time of trouble and you fill me with the joy of Salvation."

With Lent beginning this Wednesday may I encourage you to experience the joy of Salvation by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Every time I go I feel an inner peace and lighter spirit. Reflect on how you feel after you go to Confession. Don't you feel better about yourself, a little more patient, a little more thoughtful and kinder? That is Jesus reaching out touching us and healing us of our Leprosy and in turn gracing us with the power to be healers of those whom we judge as unclean, those we treat as Lepers and those whom we exclude.

Again, when I was in St. John's Parish in Rochester. I was called to the Intensive Care Unit to see a 19 year – old young man who just had serious heart surgery. On my way I stopped in the church for a moment to say a prayer for the young man. I didn't notice but another priest was hearing confessions at that time. Suddenly I heard a woman from the middle of the dimly lit church sobbing quite loudly. I stopped and asked, "Can I help you? Did you get bad news from the Clinic today?" She replied, "Father, I have always been afraid to go to Confession. I have felt unworthy, like a Leper. This is the first time in 45 years that I have gone to Confession. These are not tears of sadness. They are tears of Joy!"