

FEBRUARY 14, 2021 – SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Dear Parishioners

“If you wish, you can make me clean.” This is what the leper in today’s Gospel said when he came to Jesus and begged for healing despite the risk of being stoned to death. This leper had faith in Jesus’ ability to heal him. But he had no belief that Jesus wants that healing. So, Jesus uses three ways to encourage the leper to have faith in his desire to heal. First, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the miserable man. This contact increased the faith of the leper. Second, he said, "I do will it. Be made clean." These words made the leper believe that Jesus wanted his healing. The third is the face of Jesus that expressed the heart of Jesus, which was moved with pity for the leper. Seeing that face, the leper must have been convinced of Jesus’ compassionate love for him.

Touch, words and face. These three have to do with the signs of the Sacraments. To help us be assured of the graces God grants us, Jesus instituted the sacraments and left them in the Church. Every sacrament has external signs that are either visible, or audible, or felt through touches. There are signs that can be heard. For example, when we confess our sins and hear the words of absolution from the priest, we know that we surely receive the sacramental grace of the forgiveness of sins. In the Sacrament of baptism, as water is poured out, the person who baptizes says, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." In the Sacrament of Confirmation, a bishop or a priest says, “Be sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit” while he places the Holy Chrism Oil on the forehead of those who receive the Sacrament.

In the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, it is heard that the bride and groom exchange their vows with each other. In the sacrament of Holy Orders, there is a prayer of consecration spoken by the bishop, and in the sacrament of the Holy anointing, there is a prayer that a priest says while anointing. The Eucharist is consecrated by the priest, saying, "Take this, all of you, and at eat of it..." “Take this, all of you, and drink from it...”

Signs of Touch can be found in the anointing during the sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of the Holy anointing, and laying on of hands during the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Signs that we can see is the water used in the Sacrament of Baptism, the bridegroom and the bride who can be seen in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and the bread and wine used as materials for the Eucharist. These signs present during the administration of the Sacraments guarantee the reception of the particular Sacramental grace. Thus, we can say that, through these signs, we may feel the love of Jesus, who is moved with pity for us whose faith is weak, and strengthens our faith.

Also, in the Gospels, there are cases when the sick touched Jesus with faith and received the grace of healing. “Whatever villages or towns or countryside Jesus entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed” (Mark 6:56). There is also a story of a woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind Jesus, touched the tassel on his cloak, and was cured (Matthew 9:20-22). The reason they were able to hold onto the tassel on his cloak with faith was because it was visible to them. So, it is an example of how the visible signs strengthen our faith.

The signs that increase one’s faith are not limited to those of the Sacraments. The leper in Today’s Gospel was able to come to Jesus believing in His power of healing probably because another leper that he knew had appeared before him healed and cleansed and said who had cured him. The leper in the Gospel disobeyed Jesus’ command, ‘See that you tell no one anything,’ went away, and began to publicize the whole matter.’ I don’t think it was his intention to do so, rather the people who saw him healed would have asked him in amazement, and he was forced to answer.

Like this, the change that happens in the believers become another sign and plays the role of encouraging those who do not have faith to come to Jesus. Seeing those who have recovered their health through either physical or mental healing by the Grace of Jesus, other sick people may also have faith in the power of Jesus. More importantly, the transformation of those who have been healed from spiritual leprosy through repentance of their sins helps

others to have faith in Jesus. That is why we need to have ongoing conversion day in and day out.

We are all called to be such an instrument. We who are transformed by experiencing the power and compassion of Jesus through the Sacraments or other ways can lead others to come to Jesus with faith.

Fr. Don Bosco Park