

Friday's Gospel: The Simplicity of the Leper

Gospel for Friday in the 12th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 8:1-4*)

When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to any one;

but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.”

Commentary

The scene in today’s Gospel passage takes place immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. When our Lord came down from the mountain “great crowds followed him and a leper came to him.” We know that leprosy was a disease that forced the sufferer to withdraw from society and was considered by many as a divine punishment (cf. *Lev 13-14*). Despite the obstacles, this man manages to approach Jesus and asks with total simplicity to be cured of his illness.

In addition to social rejection, the leper also had to overcome the

shame of showing he was vulnerable and in need of help. Often this is what is most difficult when it comes to opening our soul to someone who can help us. We fear being rejected or misunderstood and that in the end the wound will be even worse. Sometimes we can lack the simplicity of the leper and prefer to keep our wretchedness and sins a secret.

The leper in today's Gospel teaches us how we should act when we see our limitations and weaknesses. The best path is to kneel before Jesus and tell him without shame what our problem is, humbly and trustingly asking for God's help. We should do so with great respect for the mystery of God's freedom, who knows best what we need: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

This attitude, which we can so often put into practice in the intimacy of our prayer, is also what we should

try to foster in the sacrament of confession, since it is there where our Lord wants to continue cleaning our heart. In the confessional we have the opportunity to imitate the leper, kneeling, confessing our uncleanness and waiting with joy for Jesus's reply: "I will; be clean."

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