

From the PASTOR'S DESK



A Personal Encounter

There must have been dimensions in the character of the Samaritan leper which the other nine did not have.

The Samaritan leper experienced a deep encounter with Jesus. A real contact of soul to soul, person to person. Jesus acted, moved, and spoke with great freedom. It is the absence of freedom which makes personal relationships difficult. This event was characterized by freely given goodness.

Our Lord did not instantly heal the ten lepers. The healing came as they went along. They all had the faith to take Jesus' instructions seriously, so they went to the priests in the temple. (The priests had authority over all matters of purity and impurity).

Leprosy was and is extremely contagious. That contagion made the afflicted unfit to take part in collective worship. The priests, rather than a doctor, were designated to declare a person pure from leprosy. Restoration of a healthy state was an expression of divine mercy.

The cured Samaritan leper needed to express his gratitude before he got any official confirmation. First, he raised his voice in praise. He went back to the place where he had left Jesus. His soul was stirred, and he needed to express his relief. The weight of leprosy had been lifted. Next, he threw himself on the ground before Jesus as an expression of worship. He had detected a divine power at work in his healing.

The leper's separation from human community had ended. Where there is a society brought into being by charity, and characterized by the practice of charity, the possibility for a higher standard of human living is so much greater. There is compassion for affliction of every kind. This incident was not a situation where a right to help could be claimed. This leper knew it was an expression of free goodness. The soul knows instinctively when it is being regarded as a "case" or a duty. This was an expression of human sympathy, a shared humanity.

When charity comes to birth in a society, its social living is marked by a solidarity of compassion. It is evident that its members know that God is love. A true Christian society treasures the belief in the primacy of selfless love, a belief in which there can be no fear and no doubt. The one leper saw and believed.

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