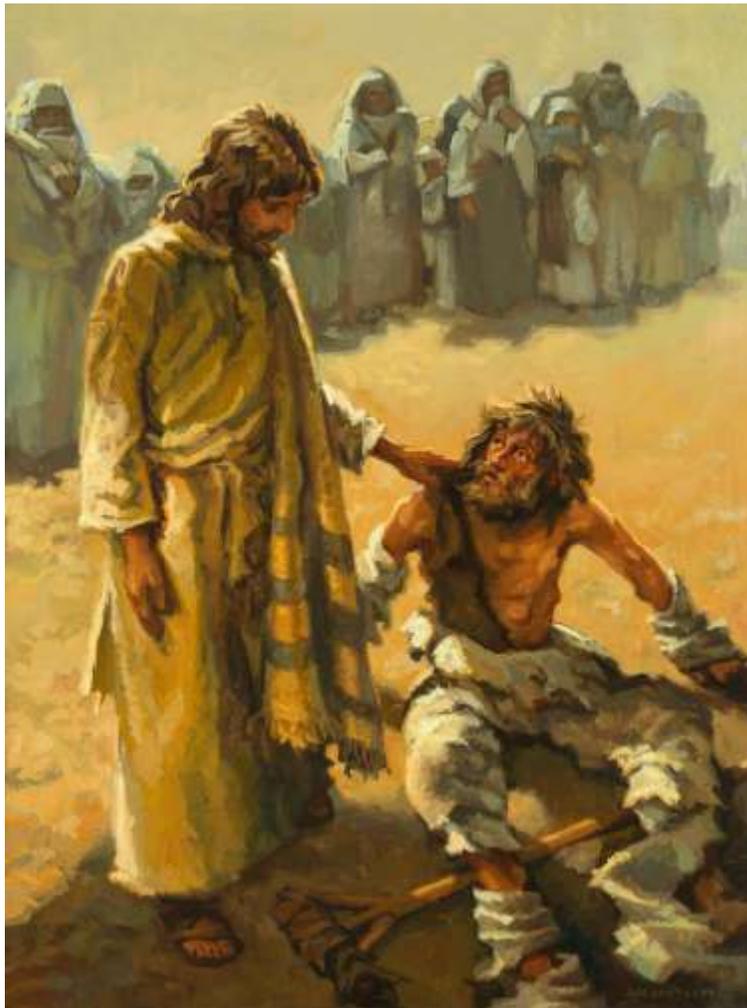


The Church of Saint Boniface

February 14, 2021

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



"If you wish, you can make me clean."

Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him,
and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."

(Mark 1, 40-41)

FATHER'S DESK

Guest Reflection

By John Foley, SJ

Eat Up

The liturgical year and the spiritual life coincide. This is a certainty. But how to explain it? Let me say what I understand, since it is the reason I write these reflections each week.

- (1) **The goal of spiritual life is to let oneself be increasingly open to the God of all creation. Doesn't liturgy help in this?**
- (2) You and I are constructed so that we become ourselves completely when (and only when) we do #1 explicitly or implicitly.
- (3) We love and are loved insofar as this takes place, whether we know it or not.
- (4) Jesus lived among us as a human being in time and space. Liturgy gradually exposes us to that.

All the above is the "spiritual life," at least in this way of looking at it. Maybe we can think here about number (1) and this week's Gospel.

The gospel stories this year are being told by Mark, just as they were told last year by Matthew. The most vivid of the gospels is Mark's. He is direct and uses fewer words, but he has more concrete details. Last week Jesus did not just "cure" Peter's mother-in-law, a bland way of putting it. He "grasped her hand, and helped her up." When Jesus stills the storm at sea, he is not just "in the boat," he is "at the stern" of it according to Mark, and he is not just asleep, but asleep "on a cushion."

Mark's approach helps us to get the texture of the story, to listen with our imaginations, to let the life of Jesus enter in. As we receive Jesus, the Word of God, we open to the God of all creation. We share his life spiritually, partaking of it in ritual: we recall it in the readings and we receive it as sacrament. Whether we realize it explicitly or not, our goal is to "know him more clearly, love him more dearly, follow him more nearly."

So, as hearers, we begin by quieting down, perhaps admitting how little each of us is, and we let the life of Jesus speak to us in the readings.

We might notice several things in this Sunday's Gospel: the man who walks up to Jesus covered with scales and scabs is breaking the law. As long as the sores are on him he should "dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp," according to the explicit instructions of the First Reading. He should be ringing a bell and crying out "Unclean, unclean!"

But Jesus does not mind. In Mark's words, Jesus is "moved with pity." Just three words, but they tell us so much.

There follows a wonderful statement from the leper. "If you wish, you can make me clean." He has to believe in Jesus' power in order to say such a thing. It is a confession of faith.

Jesus answers, "I do will it. Be made clean." Direct, honest, so revelatory of God. The whole life of Jesus seems to consist of this desire to help those who are in trouble, to give to those who have a seed of faith, who are sharing in "spirituality."

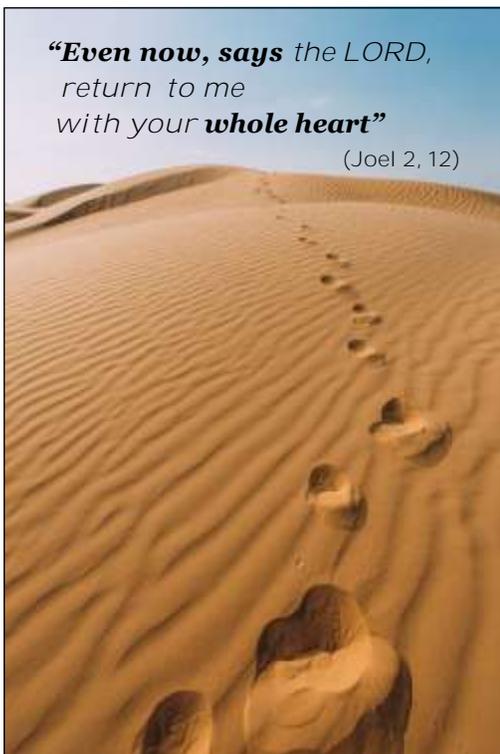
Finally, in an extraordinary move, Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the man. The ancient belief was that this sickness was communicable, and at the very least it was disgusting. Yet Jesus reaches out to him with care and says, "Be made clean."

Let's pray and ponder in our hearts this wonderful story from Mark. It tells us about God.

Doesn't it help us open to the God of all creation?

***"Even now, says the LORD,
return to me
with your whole heart"***

(Joel 2, 12)



LENT BEGINS

Ash Wednesday, February 17

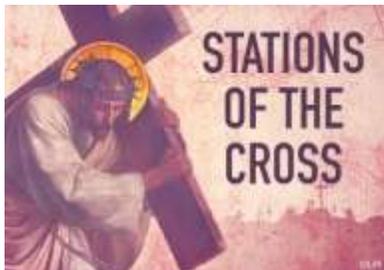
Early Risers Mass 6:00 am

Midday Mass 12:00 pm

Evening Mass 6:30 pm

MASS INTENTIONS		
Feb. 19	8:00 AM	Our deceased siblings and classmates, by Mary O'Malley
Feb. 21	8:00 AM	Daniel Cronin, by James Larcenaire
Feb. 25	8:00 AM	Prisoners and their families, living and deceased, by Mary O'Malley
Mar. 4	8:00 AM	Priests and religious, living and deceased, by Mary O'Malley

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 PM in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19
6:30 PM

Led by the Saint Boniface
Knights of Columbus

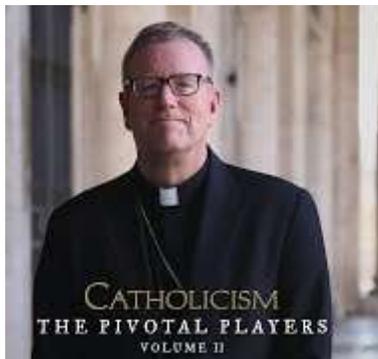
CATHOLICISM: THE PIVOTAL PLAYERS

Please join us Sundays in the Parish Hall 3-4:00 pm

Come be moved and inspired by **Bishop Barron's video series** followed by a brief discussion (all Covid19 safety protocols will be observed).

Featured "Pivotal Players" are:

- February 21: *St. Francis of Assisi*
- February 28: *St. Thomas Aquinas*
- March 7: *St. Catherine of Sienna*
- March 14: *Blessed John Newman*
- March 21: *G. K. Chesterton*



Tax Statements: Please call or email the parish office if you would like a 2020 Contribution Statement mailed to you.

Time for a Chuckle...

It is reported that these notices actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services.

- ✚ The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks On Water."
The sermon this evening: "Searching for Jesus."
- ✚ The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the parish would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.
- ✚ This evening there will be hymn singing in the park across from the church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

COLLECTION REPORT

January 31	
– Sunday Offering	\$ 2,834
– Fuel/Maintenance	474
– Other	20
Total	\$ 3,328

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Give to our parish whether you're in the pews or not! Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org

SAINT BONIFACE

PARTNERS IN CHARITY 2021

Our goal for this year is \$22,500 — we have so far raised \$12,300.

Your generosity impacts many people throughout the Diocese and also helps build stronger ministries right here at Saint Boniface.

Envelopes are available at church entrances, which you can mail with your donation or drop in our collection basket. You can also visit the Parish website to donate online, or text the word DONATE to 84576.

Can you help us reach our goal?



Need a new reusable shopping bag? For the month of February 2021, Saint Boniface will receive a \$1 donation from each purchase of the \$2.50 reusable *Fight Hunger Bag* at the Hannaford store located at 333 Mass Ave., Lunenburg. Funds will be used by our Social Action Ministry toward our parish support of food and supplies for the Northstar Family Shelter.

Open to New Life

On the one hand, there are suffering human beings like Job, slaves longing for the shade. On the other hand, there is God who cares about us, who heals the brokenhearted. Leprosy was a terrible disease in biblical times. Highly contagious, it was fatal, since there was no cure for it. The law could do nothing other than exclude lepers from participation in the life of the community.

There was more to it than that. The Responsorial Psalm 32 is a reminder that in biblical times people often regarded sin as the cause of disease. Lepers were therefore sinners, and the community excluded them from its worship. In a theocracy such as Israel, exclusion from the temple was a fate worse than death.

Jesus enters the scene as the healer of lepers. Those, for whom the law offers no hope, find in Jesus their savior, their key to re-entry into the human community.

We have our own “lepers” today. They are the wretched people of the world’s slums, the ones dying of Covid-19, the ones sitting on death row. The law of society has nothing of hope to offer them. Their only hope is in the “great prophet [who] has appeared among us,” and in those followers of Jesus like Paul, “seeking not my own advantage, but that of the many.”

The mystery of the human condition is such that, in one way or another, all will face pain, reversal, and, ultimately, the mystery of death itself. Seen through the eyes of faith, however, this mystery is not closed in upon itself.

Through sharing in the cross of Christ, human suffering and pain have a redemptive meaning and goal. They have the potential of opening a person to new life. They also present an opportunity and a challenge to all, calling us to respond to suffering just as Jesus did—with love and care.

U. S. Bishops, 1987

[The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response](#)

— Gerald Darring

Saints of the Week

February 15.

SAINT CLAUDE de la COLOMBIÈRE
Saint Claude de la Colombière met Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and eventually became her confessor.

Together they advanced the devotion to the Sacred Heart at a time when **God’s mercy needed emphasis.** God raises the right people at the right time to keep his Church on the right path.



February 16.

SAINT GILBERT of SEMPRINGHAM
Saint Gilbert of Sempringham could have been a wealthy priest, but chose to live far more poorly.

He founded a religious congregation, the Gilbertines, who followed his example of living poorly and caring for those who want. Saint Gilbert live past 100 years of age.



February 17.

SEVEN FOUNDERS of the SERVITE ORDER

Rather than just talk about the problems of the day, the Seven Founders of the Servite Order did something about it — they consciously left all and formed a new religious congregation to address the issues. They put their money where their mouths were.



February 18.

BLESSED JOHN of FIESOLO

Blessed John of Fiesolo, a Dominican Friar, is also known as Fra Angelico. He is famous for his devotional artwork and used his talents to praise God through paint. All talents can be used to praise God.

Blessed John of Fiesolo is the patron saint of Christian Artists.



February 19.

SAINT CONRAD of PIACENZA

Saint Conrad offers a different slant of holiness. Married, he and his wife opted to live separate lives — she as a Poor Clare and he as a Franciscan hermit. All this after he set a fire which was spread by the wind and destroyed the nearby fields, forests, and town.



Restored to Community

In 1868, the Norwegian scientist Gerhard Hansen discovered the biomedical cause of leprosy, an extremely chronic but not very infectious disease. Spouses rarely contract it from their infected partners. Basically it causes a loss of sensation and a progressive though painless ulceration of the extremities. Facial nodules develop, but leprosy very rarely affects the scalp. It is never white in color.

On the basis of this and even more detailed scientific knowledge, scholars are quite certain that biblical leprosy such as discussed in Leviticus ch 13-14 and in **today's gospel is not modern leprosy. Even the Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible are not the proper words for "real" leprosy.**

What then is the concern? and what did Jesus do?

The Concern

In Leviticus, it is quite definite that our ancestors in the faith are describing a repulsive, scaly condition. When it affected the skin, modern scientists think it may have been something like psoriasis. It was a real experience, but it was not modern leprosy.

Leviticus ch 13–14 notes that even clothes and the walls of homes can suffer from it. The significance of the descriptions baffles modern readers, but it clearly meant something serious to the ancients.

Our ancestors in the faith were mindful of the divine command to **"be holy as the Lord your God is holy" (Lev 19:2)**. Holiness encompassed many qualities, not the least important of which was bodily wholeness and integrity. Anyone with physical imperfections was clearly not holy as the Lord is holy.

None of these can approach the Lord. Leviticus commands **that the person afflicted with "biblical" leprosy must "live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Lev 13:46)**. It is impossible to underestimate the impact of this judgment. Mediterranean cultures are group-oriented. They need community to live just as a fish needs water. Without this social network, connections and relations with others, the Mediterranean person suffers and can die from seclusion.

Jesus Heals the Leper

Moved with compassion, Jesus came to the petitioner's rescue. Notice that Jesus' command is in the passive voice: **"Be made clean."** In biblical literature this is known as the theological or divine passive, that is, it acknowledges God as the one who performs the action without having to use God's name. Jesus willed it; God cleanses the leper.

It is impossible to say what really happened. Did the problem **disappear on the spot? Was the condition "debatable,"** such that Jesus could look at it and say it was not there, while the priests in the Temple might look at it and say it still was there?

What is of much greater import in Jesus' behavior is that he touched the man. While touching is common in this

What is of much greater import in Jesus' behavior is that he touched the man. While touching is common in this culture, touching a leper is not.

culture, touching a leper is not. Remember, "modern" leprosy is minimally "catchy." The ancients surely knew this of that scaly skin condition as well. The concern of the ancients was not

that the situation was "catching," but that it was "dirty": not infectious, but polluting. People who had the problem did not infect the community; they polluted it. For this reason, they had to live outside the camp, apart from God's holy people, alone, until the pollution was gone.

By touching the "leper" Jesus challenges his culture's judgment. In Jesus' view, the "leper's" problem is not that he pollutes. With his touch Jesus restores the leper to full membership in God's community, to solidarity in human fellowship.

The ancient distinction between an infecting and a polluting condition is worth pondering. The consequences are very different, too. Can you identify parallel or comparable situations in contemporary society? How should a Christian respond to them?

— John J. Pilch

The Worcester Diocesan Catholic Men's Conference

Saturday March 20, 2021

www.firstmensconf.org

For twenty years, the Conference has played an important role in the lives of Catholic men throughout our community – and we are determined that this good work continues, especially in these pandemic-challenged times.

To that end, the 2021 Conference Team has developed a plan that is [safe and rewarding for all](#).

Here is how it will work:

On March 20 at multiple Covid-safe host locations, conference attendees will meet and share fellowship with a limited number of others. Through **internet access they'll be able to view our featured speaker presentations**, join a Q&A session after each talk, interact in real time with our many vendors, and attend the closing Mass with Bishop McManus at 4:00 p.m.

For more information contact Claude Poirier at 978-660-3202 or email him at claudelsa@yahoo.com.

“Unclean, unclean!” (Lev 13:45)

LIVING BY APPEARANCES

Pimples. Boils. Ugliness. Wrinkles. Fat. Sores. Open wounds. Rashes. Blotches. Blemishes. Disfigurement.

The thought of such afflictions can be particularly unnerving—especially in a culture that lives by appearances and first impressions. Although quite possibly every culture prizes the surface of things, ours seems to have made a science of the old advertising slogan: **“Looking good is everything.” Looking bad is disastrous.** It is the fate of the outsider, the face of the other, marginalized and excluded. Surface defects seem inescapable, since our appearances are so evident and immediate.

Our presentation, our appearance, to the outside world is the only way we get out, the only way we can reveal ourselves. And yet our external presentation itself can be a barrier that holds us in as it holds others away.

Perhaps this is the secret to the power of leper stories. Leper” seems so frightening a term to begin with, we almost never hear it anymore, but for the mentionings in holy scripture.

Be that as it may, it is most likely that the Hebrew *sara'at* and Greek *lepra*, which are translated as **“leprosy,”** do not describe the condition that has become known as Hansen's disease. The affliction referred to in the Bible is, rather, always a condition of visible defect, whether on human skin, on the walls of houses, or on fabrics and leather. It is a disorder of surfaces, a superficial disfigurement, a blemish of facades. And it never seems to go away.

The visibility of it all makes social exclusion easy. Its **persistent presence makes contamination a constant threat.** **“As long as the sore is on him, he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp.”**

Surface defects are readily found out. There is no way to hide them, unless one hides oneself. Pretense does not help. Denial is impossible. It is obvious. The only thing to do is accept the condition. Perhaps this is an advantage that the visibly handicapped have over those whose handicaps are hidden. At least they know they have the problem: It's inescapable. At least **they cannot pretend: it's undeniable. At least they know that there is room for healing in their lives. Admission of the truth is the first condition for change.**

“If you will to do so, you can cure me.” “I do will it. Be cured.”

A paradox of our faith is that it requires of us a frame of mind we are least comfortable with: an acceptance of our existential disabilities. Not only are we unable to save ourselves. We are profoundly blemished. And all the makeup in the world cannot do the trick.

We may even someday wish to present ourselves to God as spotless milk bottles, clean, whole, pasteurized, and uncontaminated. A sad delusion. For not only is the aspiration impossible; the whole point of Christ's redemptive life is missed.

The gospel invites us to enter the mystery of our own disabilities, hidden or otherwise. We need not fear those moments of being secret **“lepers”** ourselves, those parts of our being we hide

away and lock up: our failures and sins, our vanities and deceptions, our jealousies and fakery. He will reach out to touch us there. It is only our denial that prevents the cure.

The gospel is also an invitation for us to enter into the being of Christ himself. If he is indeed our way, our truth, our life, then we make his person our own. We too can heal. We need not fear the visibly wounded who only remind us of our human frailty. The excluded and marginal, the ostracized and hidden, await our own touch. The very old or very ill need not threaten us if we allow them to name the truth of our shared inability to stand invulnerable before the world.

All of us are old. And all of us are frail. All of us, indeed, are handicapped. It's just that some of us can pretend better than others.

The prayer of the Gospel's leper becomes our own when we finally realize that our afflictions—the interior even more than the visible—are not so much to be hidden and repressed as they are to be transformed. And then, one day, as we approach the table wherefrom Jesus himself becomes our food, becomes our very bodies, the prayers we have been saying for years might suddenly come more alive for us.

“Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” The communion of Eucharist is not only the sacrament whereby our bodies are transformed. It is also his response: **“Of course I want to heal you.”**

— John Kavanaugh, SJ

† JESUS aCROSS the Border

INVITES YOU TO OUR

FOURTH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

February 19, 2021 | 7:30 - 11:30 PM

7:30pm | Adoration, Confession, and Worship
9:00pm | Holy Mass
10:00pm | Digital Trivia

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Jo-Anne Poirier, Administrative Assistant	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Lucy Marcil, Religious Education Coordinator	978-502-7993	lmarcil419@gmail.com
Claire Garrity Neas, Music Ministry	617-823-4237	cmkakosgarrity@aol.com
Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

CHAPDELAINÉ

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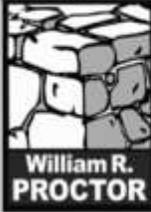
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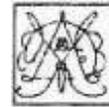
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