



6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)



Mark 1: 40-45

A man with leprosy came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling said to Jesus, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!”

Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him Jesus sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

But the man went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to Jesus from every quarter.

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Reflection:

Far more than a simple healing, the leper asks “to be made clean,” so that he may be restored to his former position before God and before others. Notice how Jesus responds by touching the man, thereby becoming unclean himself. The sacrifice the man is asked to make in the temple is a sign of what Jesus has done and will do. Two small birds were offered up. One was killed and offered to God, the second bird was dipped in the blood of the first and set free.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

By touching the leper, Jesus becomes “unclean” and takes his place. Now, he can no longer enter cities or towns openly, but must remain in the country with his followers. “Have you ever seen anyone take the place of another?” (if no one can come with an example, you may want to use the example of Jesus.) “Why do you think someone would do such a thing?”



St. Maximilian Kolbe: (A bedtime Story)

Maximillian was a bright young boy, who had big plans for his life. He lived in a time when missiles were being used in war, and he often wondered if these same missiles would carry him off to outer space one day. Many were the pictures he drew as a young boy, strapped to a capsule attached to a rocket. Many were the hours he spent studying math and science to support his fanciful dreams.

But space wasn't the only thing that preoccupied Maximillian when he was young, so did his faith in Jesus and his love for Mary. At the age of 12, he had a dream. In it, Mary offered him two crowns, one white and one red, and asked him to choose. The dream concluded with Maximillian choosing both the white crown of purity and the red crown of sacrifice.

The white crown of purity came true in his desire to learn more about his faith and become a priest. He joined a community of men, modelled on the life of St. Francis, and spent much of his earlier life as a priest promoting the importance of dedicating one's life to Mary's prayers and example. He created a monthly magazine to help him spread the news. He also gave many talks and travelled to many different places.

When war broke out in Europe, Fr. Maximillian found himself in the midst of it. By this time, his community was providing shelter for the poor and all those who were in hiding. From time to time, Fr. Maximillian would use his monthly magazine to speak out against the evil that was being done in his country and, for this he would pay a great price.

The red crown of sacrifice came to him when he was arrested for standing up for the evils that were being done in his country. Together with many others, Maximillian was sent to a prison camp, where many people were tortured and killed. As a priest, he was sentenced to a life of hard labour and forbidden from performing any of his priestly duties.

Fr. Maximillian continued to celebrate Mass for some of the prisoners and, for this, he was punished. But, as soon as was returned to his duties of hard labour, he also resumed his ministry as a priest for those who needed him. He was constantly looking over his shoulder to make sure he didn't get caught.

One day, one of the prisoners escaped. All the prisoners in the camp were gathered in the central courtyard and asked to pay attention. "A prisoner has escaped," the Commander yelled. "And, therefore, you all know what I will do." The prisoners all looked down. They knew what would happen next. For every prisoner that escaped, ten prisoners were chosen to be killed in his place. The Commander would now pick out ten prisoners who would be killed for the one who escaped.

When one of ten men's name was called, the man broke down and cried. "I have a wife and two children waiting for me," he pleaded in self-defence. But the Commander would not listen and started to take him away.

"Wait," a voice was heard from the row of prisoners. It was Fr. Maximillian stepping forward from the line. "I will take the man's place, kill me instead." For a moment there was silence. Then, pushing the crying man back into line and the commander grabbed the arm of Fr. Maximillian instead, saying, "Very well. It makes no difference to me. For every man who tries to escape, ten of you must die."

Fr. Maximilian and the other nine were put in a small cell with nothing to eat and drink. Days went by, then weeks. Still most of the prisoners continued to live. They sang songs and prayed and encouraged one another to remain strong. One day a guard came in. He had orders to shoot the ones that were still alive. Fr. Maximilian Kolbe was among them, the priest who had taken the place of someone else.



Ash Wednesday and the Beginning of Lent:

Why Lent?

Ash Wednesday begins a forty-day period prior to Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. The forty days of Lent correspond to the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert prior to his public ministry and the forty years that the tribes of Israel spent in the wilderness once they were set free from slavery in Egypt. There are many other references to forty days in the Old Testament. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights in the time of Noah. It took 40 days for the people of Israel to travel from Egypt to Mt. Sinai. Moses spent forty days on Mt. Sinai when receiving the Ten Commandments. The Prophet Elijah travelled for 40 days to encounter God on Mt. Sinai. The people of Nineveh fasted for forty days in the book of Jonah.

The forty days of Lent are counted beginning with Ash Wednesday and finishing with Passion (Palm) Sunday. That is why Lent starts in mid-week.

Lent is a time of preparation for Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. Preparation for Baptism (and the renewal of our baptismal promises, for those who are already baptized) is front and center. This is the time when those who seek to be admitted into membership in Christ intensify their discernment and those who are already baptized reflect on their lives as Christians. Consequently, it is a season marked by prayer, fasting and acts of love, with a special focus on turning away from sin and for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent are traditionally marked by an abstinence from meat. Abstinence from the eating of meat on these days is strongly encouraged for anyone 14 and older. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are also days of fasting. The rules of fasting apply to anyone between the ages of 18 and 59 (health permitting) and are defined by eating only one central meal (with no meat). Children are exempt from fasting.

Children and Lent:

Children should be introduced to Lent in a gradual way. It is good to sit down with them and talk about what they can do. Fasting from deserts, cookies, candies, chocolate, T.V., electronic devices, etc. for extended periods of time may leave a bad impression on their minds and memories. Many of these things, over shorter periods of time or “by their own choosing” can be instructive and even opportunities to talk about the importance of self-control and self-sacrifice. It may also help to move some of the emphasis away from what may seem “punishing” to the practice of daily prayer and charitable acts. **Remember, the focus is on spiritual renewal, not on proving to God or to others what you are able to do.**

Sunday Mass:

It is in this spirit that you may want to examine your family's practice of attending Sunday Mass. Going to Sunday Mass is a wonderful way to re-connect with our baptismal faith, our relationship to the God whose self-offering we imitate and the spirit of community Christ longed to build. Please make the attendance at your communities Sunday Mass the cornerstone of your Lenten journey.

A Family Lenten Proposal:

- Have a brief discussion regarding Lent. Main theme: Lent is a time to prepare our hearts to celebrate Jesus' love at Easter. We do so through times of prayer, acts of love and sacrifices.
- Take some time to come up with some ideas of things your child is able to do each day (a list of suggestions, to help you get started is included. More ideas will be included each Sunday.)
- Put each idea on a separate slip of paper and put it in a jar, box or container.
- Decorate the jar, box or container.
- At the beginning of each day, encourage them to pick one slip of paper from their jar, box or container.
- This becomes their Lenten practice for the day.
- At the end of each day, they can add another coloured paper ring to a garland that will eventually span across their bedroom (or your living or dining room).
- In this way, their "Acts of Lent" contribute to the Easter decorations in your house.
- In addition: For every time they go to Sunday Mass, they can make a Chinese lantern out of paper and add it to their garland.

Some opening "Acts of Lent" to choose from:

(Pick and choose the ones you like, add your own):

- Ask God to bless your day before you leave; take time to thank God when you come home.
- Use the words "please" and "thank you" at the dinner table.
- Do not complain about your food; eat what is given to you by your parents.
- Clean your room.
- Do something nice to someone.
- Do your chores without complaining.
- Eat only healthy foods today.
- Hold the cross in your hand for five minutes and think about how much God loves you.
- Think of three talents you have; thank God in word or by picture.
- Pray for someone who has hurt you.
- Skip dessert and say a prayer for those who have little to eat.
- Do something nice for your mom, dad or teacher.
- Allow others to be the first in line today.
- Tell your parents you love them and give them a big hug in the morning, afternoon and evening.

- Read Psalm 23 (“The Lord is my Shepherd”) and draw a picture of it.
- Spend five minutes silently listening to God in prayer.
- Offer to play a game with someone.
- No video games today.
- Help someone else with their chores.
- Say a prayer for someone who is sick or in need.
- Visit, write or phone someone you love.
- Think of three ways you saw God at work today... Say a thank you prayer.
- Spend five minutes to learn a prayer by heart (i.e. “Our Father...” “Hail Mary...”, etc.)