

101010 Vocation Awareness & Closeness to Christ

My lovely wife Dee & I have been blessed to go to Hawaii 3 or 4 times; I'd like to go again. On our last visit, we went to Maui and I remember looking across the short distance from the beach where I was relaxing to the island of Molokai. I looked over and contemplated all the history that took place there. It was in the late 1800's when leprosy broke out -- and the leaders set up a quarantined portion of that island. No one wanted to go there except Blessed Fr. Damien. A priest ministering to those in need. I'll come back to the subject of the need for priests.

In Jesus' time, "leprosy" could be any number of conditions that might affect the skin, and what we know as classic leprosy (Hansen's disease) was relatively rare. But a skin disease was sufficient to cause separation and isolation from all contact with other humans, including one's family. This could be a matter of life and death in a Middle Eastern society. In our own time, the social stigma that comes from certain forms of mental illness or AIDS, etc. can have that same isolating effect. Sometimes we isolate ourselves when we have a bad cold because we don't feel like talking to anyone!

It is this isolating - social - impact of the illness of the lepers in today's gospel scripture that can escape our attention if we become too focused on the curing and the issue of gratitude, important though they may be. Restoration and reconciliation are powerful realities. The Samaritan knew about this even more than the other lepers. He may have realized that the priest might not even look at him because he was a Samaritan! It is Jesus to whom he turns! He is more than "cured," he is saved!

Well -- there are a couple points about this... First -- the church has routinely taught that leprosy in biblical times is an example of the effect of sin in our lives. Sin isolates us. It separates us from the true Body of Christ -- and it doesn't matter if we come to Church and act like a Christian if we carry serious, mortal sin in our soul and heart. One problem with sin in our modern times is that society tries to cover it up just as lepers covered themselves. We cover up sin with relativism: oh, everyone is doing it... it can't be that bad. That's what people say when they justify living together without benefit of the sacrament of marriage. It's what society does when it display virtual pornography in movies and television -- and we watch it defending it because that's the way it is these days. Using an image from scripture, it's better to shoot your television (wink, wink) than to justify what is sinful.

The second point I want to make is that people who had leprosy in biblical times had to present themselves to the priest if they were healed. It was the priest who would proclaim them healed and allow them to return to society. That is what we who are true and practicing Catholics... not relativistic Catholics but real practicing Catholics believe about the Sacrament of Reconciliation (or Confession as we used to call it). Reconciliation restores God's grace in us... and even if we are going once a month with venial sins... we receive strength and help to try to overcome our minor failings, frequent though they may be.

All of this works so clearly into the secondary theme for today which is vocation awareness. Young men... young women are not going to be called to vocations in the Church and to the service of believers if they are not raised with active participating parents. And if most here today are grandparents - we bear no less a responsibility for the example of real, meaningful Catholic lives -- which include participating in all of the Sacraments... regularly participating. Our Blessed Mother has appeared at Fatima and many other locations - and one of her consistent messages is repentance and frequent Confession... Once a month is a good goal to set.

Vocations lead to priests... we are dreadfully short of priests -- and this is caused by a couple recent generations of relativistic

thinking and example by parents and grandparents. We are short of holy orders of nuns... but there are some orders which are exploding... many young women are coming to them and they glad don the habits and clothing of an earlier time... and the women in these orders spend hours in prayer each day... and frequent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament... and frequent participation in the Sacraments. Thankfully, in many dioceses there has also been an explosion in the call for men to become deacons....

In a recent teaching by the Holy Father... Pope Benedict said that it is "obvious" that the characteristics of holy lives "are not things of the past," rather they tell us that "the center of a happy life, a true life, is friendship with Jesus."

"This friendship," he taught, "is learned in love for the Sacred Scriptures, in love for the liturgy, in profound faith, in love for Mary - to know ever more truly God himself and, in such a way, true happiness, the goal of our lives." Far be it from me to close with any words other than those of Pope Benedict - but may I add that what has happened in society is that many have become lepers -- sin lepers but they have covered it up. Jesus is waiting to bring healing for those who come forward and ask. Amen.

Reading 1

[2 Kgs 5:14-17](#)

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times
at the word of Elisha, the man of God.
His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child,
and he was clean of his leprosy.

Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God.
On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said,
"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth,
except in Israel.
Please accept a gift from your servant."

Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;"
and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused.
Naaman said: "If you will not accept,
please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth,
for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice
to any other god except to the LORD."

[Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (cf. 2b) The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands:
break into song; sing praise.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

[2 Tm 2:8-13](#)

Reading 2

Beloved:

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David:

such is my gospel, for which I am suffering,
even to the point of chains, like a criminal.
But the word of God is not chained.
Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen,
so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus,
together with eternal glory.
This saying is trustworthy:
If we have died with him
we shall also live with him;
if we persevere
we shall also reign with him.
But if we deny him
he will deny us.
If we are unfaithful
he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself.

[Lk 17:11-19](#)

Gospel

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem,
he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.
As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him.
They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying,
"Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"
And when he saw them, he said,
"Go show yourselves to the priests."
As they were going they were cleansed.
And one of them, realizing he had been healed,
returned, glorifying God in a loud voice;
and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.
He was a Samaritan.
Jesus said in reply,
"Ten were cleansed, were they not?
Where are the other nine?
Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"
Then he said to him, "Stand up and go;
your faith has saved you."

Rome, Italy, Oct 6, 2010 / 06:27 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- On Wednesday morning Pope Benedict focused his weekly address on the extraordinary life of a 13th-century German woman and saint, St. Gertrude the Great. From her life, the Holy Father said that modern Christians can see that true happiness still springs from a friendship with Christ.

More than 15,000 faithful and pilgrims joined Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square for Wednesday's general audience. Among the crowd were candidates for the diaconate from the Pontifical North American College, accompanied by hundreds of family members and friends.

Continuing his series of catecheses on 13th-century monastic saints, the Holy Father chose to recount the life of St. Gertrude the Great, the only German woman honored with the title of "'Great,' for her cultural and evangelical stature." He observed that it was "with her life and her thought that she left her mark in a singular way on Christian spirituality."

He called her "an exceptional woman, endowed with particular natural talents and extraordinary gifts of grace, of very profound humility, ardent zeal for the salvation of neighbor, of intimate communion with God in contemplation and readiness to aid the needy."

St. Gertrude entered the convent at Helfta at five years old, where she was taught by St. Matilda of Hackeborn, whom the Pope remembered for her intense spirituality in his catechesis last Wednesday. Gertrude was intelligent and studious, but also impulsive and described by herself as "negligent."

At 25 years old, however, she underwent a profound conversion when she saw Christ in a vision and recognized the salvation he earned for the world with his blood.

The Pope remembered that her conversion led her to concentrate on theological studies and to leave concern of "external things" behind to dedicate herself to "intense, mystical prayer, with an exceptional missionary ardor." And, "in her religious practice, she pursued prayer with devotion and faithful abandonment to God," the Holy Father recalled.

"Gertrude transformed all of this into an apostolate: she dedicated herself to writing and divulging the truth of faith with clarity and simplicity, grace and persuasion, serving the Church with love and fidelity, so much so as to be useful and appreciated to theologians and pious persons."

She died at the convent when she was in her mid-forties, as the 14th century began.

Concluding his catechesis by making some unprepared remarks, Pope Benedict said that it is "obvious" that the characteristics of

her life "are not things of the past," rather they tell us that "the center of a happy life, a true life, is friendship with Jesus."

"This friendship," he taught, "is learned in love for the Sacred Scriptures, in love for the liturgy, in profound faith, in love for Mary - to know ever more truly God himself and, in such a way, true happiness, the goal of our lives."