

# Christ Our Hope Catholic Church

## *Faith in Laity Corner*



**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Times**  
**Monday, February 12, 2018**

**Year 2/Cycle B**  
**Lev. 13:1-2, 34-6; Mk. 1: 40-45**

## *Space Touching*

Maybe it is an American cultural practice, that people often speak about others being in ‘*their personal space*’; and use words like ‘*you are in my personal space*.’ Being from the Caribbean, Trinidad in particular, there is very little concern for others being in one’s personal space, as we go to ‘fetes’ or soca parties and no one has space, people are all in a designated area moving to the music, or jumping to the dictates of the song, in everyone’s space. The Readings for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinal times reminds me of cultural differences and how they are viewed by people from one group to another.

The readings speak of the most dreaded disease recorded in Biblical times, both in New and Old Testaments- leprosy. I guess the only illnesses, in our modern times, that is treated with such utter contempt and fear maybe- AIDS. Leprosy was greatly feared due to the social and physical stigma bestowed on it and what it did to the human person. There were highly observable changes to the victim of leprosy.

*“When someone has on the skin a mark, lesion, or blotch  
which appears to develop into a scaly infection” (Lev. 13:2)*

From Old Testament time of Moses and Aaron, the latter was appointed the priest for the newly freed people. Not only was the priest responsible for offering sacrifices on behalf of the people; but was the medical expert on declaring whether a person harbored a disease which would affect the well-being of the community. As the society got more structured so did the prohibitions placed on people considered as carriers of a contagious disease. Let us be mindful that these practices and beliefs lasted up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. People were placed in isolation, on a special plot of land, on a

separate island, in a colony for only people diagnosed with leprosy.

*“Observing the raw flesh, the priest shall declare the person unclean, because raw flesh is unclean; it is a scaly infection.” (Lev. 13:15)*

A person declared unclean in the Jewish society, was not allowed to mingle, or be seen in public with ‘clean’ people. Your family abandons you, your role in society disappeared. You rely on the charity and good-will of what may be left for you. You are condemned, without hope. The Gospel points us to a man with the disease who refused to be forced aside.

*“A leper\* came to him [and kneeling down] begged him (Mk. 1:40)*

One rule of thumb for this disease ... physical contact was forbidden. No one was allowed to touch, hug or shake the hand of a leper. Think what it would be like for a child to have this disease, he or she would be forced to go through life without the touch of another human being. Not only was the child abandoned, but all would be afraid to shake his hand, give a hug or even breathe the air of this child. The child will be forced to leave the home, have no contact with his/her parents, siblings or friends and move to the outside of the city to live with strangers who are in the same painful condition he/she may be in. There will be no hope.... It is this reality that this leper turned to Jesus to beg for some relief, yet he knew that it would have to be within God’s Will,

*"And said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." (Mk.1:40)*

Jesus demonstrates the importance and healing power of entering a person's space. A person declared a leper, had all the personal space they needed. No one entered their space. Jesus entered that forbidden zone, to bring the touch which healed him. He entered the personal space of the leper, to heal him...

*“Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him” (Mk. 1:41)*

Jesus’ healing at times required that we break the conventional rules of health,

and enter into the space of others. No space is too personal, sick or condemned that the healing touch could not affect. This touch of Jesus brought on instantaneous healing for the man.

*“The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean.” (Mk. 1:42)*

Has the use of personal space been our excuse for not reaching out to others, or denying others entry into touching distance in our lives? Far too often we make excuses, about ‘personal space’ to keep others from coming with their healing touch. The touch of another human being is one of the most important aspects of our humanity. We are born to feel the touch of another human being. How often do we avoid shaking hands, giving a hug, or reaching out to others we don't know? If animals need a human touch to be healthy, how more important it is for humans to have the touch and hug of another person.

We too have our leprosy- greed, depression, prejudice, jealousy, stress, over sensitivity, procrastination, pessimism, deception.... , we need the healing touch of Jesus to make us whole. Don't let keeping people from entering our personal space be the deterrent from receiving the healing touch we need in our lives- touch our space.....

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*Let us break the cycle of aloneness and depression, by entering the personal space of Jesus so that He can lead us to love and give the healing touch to others.*

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Faith in Laity Corner is a weekly review of Sunday's readings was written by

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