

Sixth Sunday of the Year

Jesus cures the leper

INTRODUCTION

Jesus never judged people by their appearance or paid any attention to what others thought of them. Time and again he made tax collectors and other outcasts feel welcome and loved. Today we hear how Jesus changed the life of a leper who asked for his help.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and say Candle Prayer 2.

SORRY

After a few moments of quiet reflection, ask one of the children to choose a "sorry color" and have all say the corresponding prayer together.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 3.

GOSPEL (MARK 1:40-45)

One day a leper came to Jesus, and falling on his knees, he said to Jesus, "If you really wanted to, you could help me and cure my leprosy." Jesus was filled with compassion, and reaching out to touch him, he said, "Of course, I want to help you!"

At that moment the leprosy disappeared and the man was cured. Jesus sent him away asking him not to tell anyone about what had happened, but the man was so overjoyed that he told everyone he met. Soon crowds of people followed Jesus wherever he traveled.

DISCUSSION

A *leper* is the name given to a person suffering from a terrible disease called *leprosy*, an infectious disease which can deform and cripple people who suffer from it. It is caused by a tiny germ and attacks the hands, feet, and other parts of the body.

Lepers cannot feel the infected parts of their bodies and often through injury, lose fingers and toes. Leprosy can also cause blindness.

What happens if you catch an infection like measles or chicken pox? Are you allowed to go to school and mix with your friends? To avoid anyone else catching your illness, you are usually kept at home, away from everyone else.

In Jesus' time, lepers were sent to live together, far away from the towns and villages. They carried bells or shouted aloud so that people could hear them coming and avoid them. Because of their disfigurements, people were frightened by their appearance, and they led sad and miserable lives.

Jesus reached out and touched the leper as a sign of his deep love and willingness to help. Because of this love, Jesus completely transformed the leper's life so that he no longer had to suffer.

Leprosy, now called Hansen's disease, still exists where there is poverty; and it is common in Asia, Africa, and South America. (If possible, show the children where these countries are on a map or globe.) Because it can be cured with modern medicines, victims of Hansen's disease are no longer treated as outcasts to be afraid of. People have learned to treat them with the same kindness and love as Jesus did.

ACTIVITY

Help the children to make a picture with a sliding figure of the leper before and after Jesus cured him.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, just as the leper trusted
in your love and compassion,
we can, too.

Help all those who are suffering or ill,
and touch them with your love
so that their lives will be transformed.

