

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“A leper came to Jesus and, kneeling down, begged him:
‘If you wish, you can make me clean.’”

Mark 1: 40

Have you ever really begged someone for something? If so, what was it and when was it? Was it for yourself or for someone you loved? Why did you beg for it? The leper in the story today is cut off from his family and from the community. He has to live on the outskirts of the town, cut off, so as not to contaminate anyone else. We have no idea how long this has been in effect. But it is clear that he has heard about this Jesus. It is clear that he believes that Jesus has the power to cure him and thus return him to his family and loved ones. And so he boldly approaches Jesus and gets close enough that when he begs Jesus to cure him Jesus is able not only to speak to him but to touch him and render him clean of the disease.

He doesn't just ask, he begs. He goes all in on his request. He wants Jesus to set him free from the effects of this disease. He doesn't know Jesus but he believes that Jesus has the power. For the first time when reading today's gospel story I got a sense of the corona-virus instead of leprosy. I have encountered a goodly number of people who have the corona-virus and are very much isolated from their family and friends. I have encountered many parishioners who have other illnesses or diseases but because of covid19 their families are barred from being with them at this time of need.

The isolation, the lack of social contact, we all have begun to sense, is taking its toll on us and on those we love. No longer is this just a story about some leper from two thousand years ago. No. Now it is about us right now and how we are beseeching the healing power of Jesus Christ to be at work in those we love and for whom we are praying. Now everything is much more real and we find ourselves willing to beg the Lord for relief. There is a message in all of this for all of us. Are we getting it? That is the question of the week.