**Homily for** **the** **6th Sunday in Ordinary Time***Rev. Francis D. Kim*

In today’s Gospel, a leper approaches Jesus, saying, “If you wish, you can make me clean.”

But, there was a deep sense of despair, because leprosy was an awful disease almost without hope. Lepers were the ‘living dead.’ Lepers were forbidden to get near to other people, and his religion taught him that his sin caused his suffering. Leprosy was a symbol of sin.

Leprosy was a fatal disease. It separated a man from his family and drove him outside his village to lonely places. They had to carry a bell to warn others by ringing the bell, shouting, “Unclean, unclean, keep away.”

Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out His hand, touched the leper. Then, the leprosy left him. Jesus touched the untouchable leper, restored him to family and friends.

Told to keep away from town, to stay clear of everyone, the leper wondered if anyone loved him. But, Jesus says, “Yes. God loves you. By my warm and gentle touch, know I love you, I love you like my brother.”

He touches him with love. Jesus returns the leper to the community. The disease is gone. Cured, he can walk into town. No longer separated from family and friends.

To Jesus, no one is unclean. No one is outside God’s love. Jesus has compassion for everybody. Jesus touches, touches with love.

Moved with pity, Jesus sets a new standard: kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Jesus chose to heal the leper. Not only did He heal him, but He also touched him, forgive him, and restore his life. Jesus reached out to the loneliness of that man, and He touched his life to cure him.

Deep within our soul is the place to which only Jesus can heal. With the power to heal, Jesus touched the leper, healed him body and soul. Restored the leper as a loved member of his family, welcomed him among friends, renewed his place in the village.

In this story, Jesus shows us how much he wants to heal us. Jesus touches us our suffering and brokenness with His grace. Jesus gave us His healing touch to a place where no doctor can operate, where no therapist can probe, where no medication can soothe.

Hate, anger, bitterness, arrogance, envy, and fear are real aches to the soul. They can isolate us from others as surely as the leper’s skin condition isolated him from the people.

We need healing, as the leper in today’s Gospel needed healing. His heart always moves with pity for us. Surely, Jesus will heal us. And, as the leper filled with joy, and went off telling everyone that Jesus had cured him, we are also to proclaim the Good News that Jesus heals us.

This is our ministry to bring healing where we can, to touch the sick and lonely, to care for them, never let anyone get separated from our love and compassion.

We all have our desert moments, our times of sickness, or disappointment, or frustration. When we keep our hearts open to the love and mercy of God, incredible things happen. We need to approach Jesus with that same humility and trust we see in the leper.

This story is for us, to show us the heart of Jesus. It reveals his love and his desire to free us from sin. If we continue to hope and trust in the power of Jesus to provide for our needs, blessings will flow into our lives always.