

PEDRO ARRUPE INSTITUTE, RAIA - GOA

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY LITURGY

14th February 2021 – Sixth Sunday In Ordinary Time

LV 13: 1-2, 44-46 | 1 COR 10: 31- 11:1 | MK 1: 40-45

Spiritual Track: Fr. Joseph Fernandes SJ

HEALING THE ISOLATED

Ms Cameron, from London, was tested on 5 March. She received a positive result four days later.

"It's a horrible feeling not being able to go out and it is quite frightening," she said.

Ms Cameron, who once worked in international relations, is currently on benefits due to poor health and said she was finding it costly to order in food.

"I worry about what people would do if they have to use food banks," she said.

Ms Cameron said she had read five novels in five days and friends had been phoning to help keep her spirits up.

But she said it could still be a lonely and "really, really scary" experience.

We all need to connect with others, to be in communion with them. We don't like to feel isolated or cut off from family, friends, or the wider community. One of the most challenging aspects of sickness during the time of lockdown, the isolation that it brought. As we hear in the first reading today, for hygienic reasons, lepers had to live apart, 'outside the town. Lepers were only allowed to have each other for company. They lived apart from their family, their friends and the community to which they belonged. Leprosy also was most isolating form of disease during the time of Jesus. The leper in today's gospel seemed determined to break out of his isolation. He did something that was unconventional and daring in approaching Jesus and pleading on with him, 'If you want to, you can cure me.' In his desperation to be healed he did something that was against the Jewish Law at the time. In response to the leper's daring approach, Jesus did something just as unconventional. He reached out his hand and touched the leper. If it was forbidden for a leper to approach the healthy, it was certainly forbidden for a healthy person to touch a leper. It seems that the leper's desire to be freed from his isolation was met by an equally strong desire on the part of Jesus to deliver the leper from his isolation. The gospels portray Jesus as someone who freed people from their isolation, whether it is physical isolation due to illness or spiritual isolation. Both Jesus and the leper teach us a very important lesson today; that is we need to break out of our isolation, even when the odds seem to be stacked against us.

There are many people in India, who are staying isolated and lonely life because of their material poverty, poor health, some disability or past experience that forced them to withdraw themselves from social life. Such people, like leper, need to take their courage in

their own hands and head out in some bold direction. It was desperate physical condition that drove the leper to seek out Jesus. Sometimes for us too, it can be our desperation that get us to connect with Jesus and with loved ones. The man in today's gospel who approaches Jesus could well be the patron saint of all those who strive to connect with others against all the odds. Unlike the leper, Jesus was perfectly healthy, but he had something of the same desire and energy to connect with others. When approached by the leper, he could have turned away, as most people would have done. Instead, Jesus stood his ground and engaged with the leper, reached out to him not only by word but by action. He not only spoke to him, but he touched him. What the Lord did for the leper he wishes to continue doing through each one of us in our own day. There are many isolated and lonely people among us. The scope is there for all of us to take the kind of step that Jesus took towards the leper. In our parishes, in neighbourhood, in the slums and the roadsides, we need to look in and make sure that they are all right and have what they need. There are always people among us waiting to be touched by our compassionate presence. When they are, they can experience the same kind of transformation as the leper did in today's gospel.