



Matthew 8:1-4

When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in you and in your love. I trust in you as the way for me to live. I hope in the power of your cross to free me from all that is not you. I love you and want my love to be more real so that I may imitate your pure and total love.

Petition: Lord, help me to turn from my sins.

1. Lord, If You Wish, You Can Make Me Clean: Whenever we come to the sacrament of confession, we want the words of this humble leper to be on our lips: "Jesus, you can heal me from that which ails me, from my sin." This leper's act of faith is comparable to the Good Thief's faith. While nailed to the cross next to Our Lord he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." In each case they see with eyes of faith beyond what the eyes of their body tell them. When we come to confess our sins with eyes of faith, we want to look beyond the priest to Jesus, the one who not only forgives our sins but heals our souls.

2. He Stretched Out His Hand, and Touched Him: The Pharisees once asked the disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11). Jesus is not afraid of my leprosy; he is not afraid of my sin. His love is simply more powerful than any person's sin, no matter how grave. He is not afraid to be associated with sinners or to touch lepers. It was this same love that moved the Word to become "flesh and dwell among us" (John 1:14). By taking our human nature to himself he "stretched out his hand and touched us." When we give Jesus our sins he nails them to the cross -- and it is precisely at the cross that we discover two things: the true nature of our sin and the infinite love the prompts

Jesus to touch us.

3. I Do Will It. Be Made Clean: Jesus wants the leper to be healed; he likewise wants you and me to be healed, clean, whole. Through the hands of the priest, Jesus stretches out his own hand and bids us to be clean so that we may not remain in our sins. Sin knocks at the door of our lives, but thanks to Jesus we do not have to continue in it. When Jesus heals us, he also gives us the strength (grace) to stay healthy. He heals us so that we may freely walk with him and imitate him in our lives. But do I want to leave aside all my sin? What former leper would ever wish to return to his leprosy? Ultimately it is the heart that must be made clean by way of constant prayer, the sacraments and a genuine effort to do what we know is pleasing to God.

Conversation with Christ: Jesus, you know when I sit and when I stand. Before a word is on my lips you know the whole of it; with all my ways you are familiar (cf. Psalm 139). Help me to live in the light, correspond to your grace, and experience the healing joy that comes from friendship with you.

Resolution: This week I will go to confession, taking time to prepare myself well.