

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46
1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1
Mark 1:40–45

MONDAY

Mark 8:11–13
"Why does this generation ask for a sign?"

TUESDAY

Mark 8:14–21
"Are your hearts hardened?"

WEDNESDAY

Mark 8:22–26
"Can you see anything?"

THURSDAY

Mark 8:27–33
"Who do people say that I am?"

FRIDAY

Mark 8:34–9:1
"... let them ... take up their cross and follow me."

SATURDAY

Mark 9:2–13
"Elijah is indeed coming first ..."

Healed and Restored

Today's Gospel reading starts off with a leper approaching Jesus.

The lepers of this time not only suffered from their physically disfiguring ailment, they were also socially segregated, that is, separated from family, friends, and community.

The Law stated, in the first reading from the Book of Leviticus, very clearly that someone identified as a leper would be pronounced unclean by the priest, and then, "He shall live alone." Think of how horrible this sentence of separation was to those who had skin diseases.

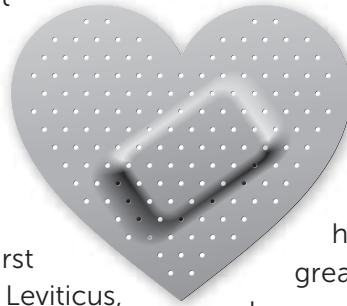
When Jesus heals the leper in this Gospel story, he not only frees him from his physical ailment, he also restores the now-cured leper back to the community. The man can return to his family and his friends and the life he had before. This healing is an integral kind of healing. It certainly touches the body,

physically. But it also deeply affects the spirit of the man who was healed.

In fact, this integral healing and restoration so deeply affects the man in today's reading that, despite the instruction by Jesus to remain silent, he cannot restrain himself. He must proclaim the great and good thing that has happened to him.

As we step back and consider the healing provided by Jesus, we recognize immediately that it is not just a demonstration of a special power. Jesus' healing is, in the first place, a manifestation of the compassion of God. He heals the leper because he is "moved with pity."

Jesus' healing foreshadows what will happen to us, when, through faith and the sacraments, we experience a total and integral transformation of our own lives.



The Faith of the Church

The Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus and does so in several ways. The ministry of health attends to the physical needs of the sick. In a particular way, through the Anointing of the Sick, the Church accompanies those who are ill. Finally, through her prayer, the Church intercedes on behalf of all who are not well (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1499–1525).



Questions of the Week

All of us have encountered illness either in our own lives or in the lives of those who are close to us. We can recognize the impact of illness. We know it takes physical toll but also a social and spiritual toll as well.

Adults

How do I understand the "integral healing" and the restoration that only God can offer, as I reflect on my own experience of illness and limitation?

Children

When has God helped me to feel better?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on "Gospel Reflections") and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

The Church, as we have already noted, continues the healing ministry of Jesus in today's world. The care of the sick is not just the responsibility of Catholic healthcare institutions or ordained clergy who administer the sacrament to the sick. The responsibility touches all of us in the Body of Christ.

This responsibility means that we are committed to being a healing presence in our world. This may take a number of practical directions. As citizens, for example, our concern for healthcare is more than a political consideration. Our faith should lead us to take positions that address the

most vulnerable of God's sons and daughters, because we share God's compassion for his children.

Moved by faith and a sense of responsibility for healing, we can visit the sick and offer words of encouragement and hope. We can let people know that they do not "dwell apart" from us. For some in a given parish, to be a healing presence means to assume a role in the ministry of care.

All of us extend Jesus' healing presence to the world by being a community of intercession that remembers and lifts up to God all who are in need of healing.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Make a list of family and friends who are ill and in need of prayers. Let their names and intentions be mentioned as the family gathers to pray and eat.

In the workplace or in school. If you are aware that someone is struggling with illness or has a family member who is, make a special effort to assure them of your prayers and support.

In the community. Identify some of the specific health care needs of the community and consider steps that can be taken to address them.



Meditation Moment

Jesus' miracles made people take notice. They were "signs," proclaiming that something historic was happening. They were "signs," proclaiming that Jesus was setting in motion the long-awaited Kingdom of God. And what was this Kingdom of God? It was a new world order in which love would replace hate, concern would replace apathy, light would replace darkness, and life would replace death. It was a new world order in which God's will is to be done "on earth as it is in heaven."

For reflection . . .

What is one way my personal life reflects to those around me the new world order that Jesus began?

I ALONE CONTROL THE INNER SWITCH
THAT CAN MAKE A LIGHT IN OUR WORLD.

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Let Me Be Your Healing Hand

Jesus, let me
be your healing hand.
May I follow you and see
others through the eyes of your
compassion. Give me the courage,
patience, and power to face the
illnesses of my brothers and sisters and
to be an instrument of their healing.
Above all, enable me to welcome
and keep those who suffer
in a place of hope, a hope
rooted in you.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

The Lord sustains them
on their sickbed;
in their illness you heal
all their infirmities.

Psalm 41:3

Profile in Faith

Saints Cosmas and Damian

(?– c. 303) were martyrs of the Early Church. They were brothers and doctors, known for their devotion to their patients and a willingness to exercise their healing skills for the poor. They are patrons of physicians, and their feast is celebrated on September 26.

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