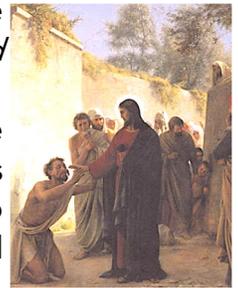


The encounter between Jesus and the “leper” in this Sunday’s reading is instructive. First, though the Law commands the man to keep his distance, he dares to approach Jesus. The source of his confidence is expressed in his words: “If you wish, you can make me *clean*.” He knows that Jesus can mediate healing. It is telling that he asks for “cleansing”—a word that refers to the removal of ritual pollution. For him, to be restored to the worshiping community is as important as to be healed from the discomfort of the skin ailment.

Jesus’ response, Mark tells us, springs from compassion. He stretches out his hand, touches the man, and says, “I do will it. Be made clean.” Notice that this gesture technically puts Jesus in violation of the Torah, for coming in contact with the ritually unclean would then render him ritually unclean. Still, because the man’s greatest suffering is his exclusion from the community, his status as an “untouchable”, Jesus touches him. What is more, by mandating the healing in terms of ritual purity (“Be cleansed!”), Jesus is taking upon himself the role of the Temple priest. And yet, Jesus is quick to honor another of the Levitical rules by insisting that the healed and cleansed man get checked out by the priest and offer the required sacrifice.

This is a powerful illustration of the way Jesus related to his traditions. He is a Torah-keeping Jew. Always, he affirms the theological and moral vision of the Law of Moses. However, he will sometimes transgress ritual or ceremonial law when meeting a human need supersedes it. Thus, he eats with the unclean and heals (does “medical work”) on the Sabbath. But these exceptions are always in the service of the essential commandment—*love of God and love of neighbor* (Mark 12:28-34; Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18).

This episode invites us into the life of grace in two powerful ways. Can we place ourselves in the sandals of the “untouchable” man, and present ourselves to Jesus the healer, with the “leper’s” profound confidence? Or can we be led to acknowledge some “outsider” in our own lives who could use our compassion and readiness to reach out?



Christ Healing

by Carl Heinrich Bloch

Dennis Hamm, SJ, St. Louis University (Sunday Website), St. Louis, MO



GOOD NEWS — A FIRST PLACE MIRACLE!

After 28 years, First Place has had its prayers answered. A generous, anonymous, couple has donated **2 million** dollars for the purchase and renovation of the Cross-fire building on West Amazon St.. Nineteen efficiency apartments for families will be created and used as short term housing. This huge project will start serving our community in Fall of **2019**. This means we will welcome families at St. Peter this coming Fall 2018, as usual. Our gifts of labor and food will then relocate to the new site for Fall of 2019, if renovation proceeds as planned. Details are still in the planning stages, so we will keep you posted as progress is made. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for this enormous blessing!

Gretchen & Fred Merten

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO SHARE WITH THE FRANCISCANS IN THE REACTIVATION CEREMONY & BLESSING OF THE FRATERNITY, ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 12 NOON, AT ST. PETER CHURCH (FOLLOWED BY RECEPTION). FOR INFO CONTACT: LOIS CERSOVSKI (541-953-6632) OR DAVE OLSZYK (541-689-8070).



CARMELITE AUXILIARY — The Auxiliary will meet on the 2nd Monday, **February 12th, 10:00am**, at the Carmel of Maria Regina (87609 Green Hill Rd. Eugene), in the library. Questions? Call Luellen at 541-915-5342.

MARDI GRAS (FAT TUESDAY) PARTY! Many saints knew how to enjoy a good party with fine foods and drink! All young adults (ages 21-39, married or single) are invited to Fat Tuesday, **Feb. 13th**, for a festive Mardi Gras party. To get details, contact: eugeneyoungadults@gmail.com or 541-270-9329 or [facebook.com/EugeneCYA](https://www.facebook.com/EugeneCYA). **ALSO** — Theology on Tap **every 2nd Thursday** at the K of C Hall.

IT'S TIME FOR LUNCH! Catholic Daughters is hosting their 4th annual **SWEETHEART SALAD LUNCHEON and Fudge Sale**, at St. Mary Parish Hall, on Saturday, **February 17th, 11:30—1:30** (doors open at 11:00am). \$10/adult, \$8/senior, \$5/12yo & under — tickets on sale at the door. Fudge sales will benefit students attending the 2018 Steubenville Conference. Questions? Contact Julia: 541-344-6851 or email to: cdacourtoregon118@gmail.com.

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAS — Regular Court meeting on **January 18** (Thursday) ... Mass at 12:15pm, followed by potluck/meeting at **1:00pm**; bring a dish to share. For info: Julia Kelso at 541-344-6851, or www.cdacourtregion118.com.

 **40 DAYS FOR LIFE.** You are invited to join other Christians for **40 Days for Life** campaign of prayer and fasting for an end to abortion, from **February 14th** (Ash Wednesday) through **March 25th** (Palm Sunday). There is also a peaceful prayer vigil during this 40-day campaign, in the public right-of-way in front of the Planned Parenthood facility (3579 Franklin Blvd). There will be a 'kick-off' Mass for this campaign on **Feb. 13**, 6:00pm, at St. Mary church (1062 Charnelton) — please join us! For info, or to volunteer, contact Eileen at 541-543-7168 (or email to: etmoregon@yahoo.com); website is: 40DaysforLife.com/Eugene.

FAITH SERIES: CATECHISM THROUGH THE YEAR

WHY DO WE USE HOLY WATER?

2 Kings tells of how Naaman, an Aramean general, suffered from leprosy. When he sought help from the prophet Elisha, the prophet instructed him to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. Once the general complied, he was healed of his leprosy (2 Kgs 5:1-14).

Did that muddy water possess some kind of magic? Of course not! — instead, it was a rather ordinary vehicle of God's extraordinary power. As on many occasions recorded in Scripture, the Creator used a natural element of his creation to work a supernatural result.

This divine element lies at the heart of the Catholic Church's sacraments. It also gives rise to the use of "sacramentals", which are, as the Catechism explains: "sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them, men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy" (SC 60; cf. CIC, can. 1166; CCEO, can. 867).

Some sacramentals are actions, such as blessings, exorcisms, or making the Sign of the Cross. Others are objects that have been blessed, such as ashes, palm branches, or crucifixes. "Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it" (CCC 1670). While the number of sacraments instituted by Christ is seven, the number of sacramentals varies according to the pastoral judgment of the Church.

Water is an ancient symbol of life and purity, used in many scriptural rituals and analogies (Ex 40:12; Is 12:3). Holy water is thus a sacramental that recalls the sacrament of Baptism and its cleansing effects. Catholics bless themselves with it while making the Sign of the Cross, whenever they enter or exit a church. It may also be sprinkled on objects when they are being blessed.

Do Catholics think there is some kind of magic in holy water? NO ... but they know that even ordinary water, when joined to the prayers of the Church, can be a powerful source of divine blessing, just as God healed Naaman in the waters of the Jordan.

RECOMMENDED READING: Excerpt taken from The NEW Catholic Answer Bible

Ex 23:25 · Lv 14:5-7 · Nm 5:17; 8:7 · Ps 1:1-3 · Is 55:1 · Mt 3:13-17 · Jn 7:37-39 · Eph 5:25-27 · Rev 21:6; 22:1-2,17 · & Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) Nos. 1667-1673 · 1667-1678 ·