

## VI ORDINARY TIME - 11th February 2018

### ....THE LEPROSY LEFT HIM, AND HE WAS MADE CLEAN – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi

#### Mark 1,40,45

*And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.*

.The reaction of those present at the end of Jesus' first teaching in the synagogue was that he had authority and his teaching was new, not like that of the scribes. What was the difference? The scribes taught the observance of God's laws, Jesus taught the welcoming of God's love and what was the difference? If one is taught the observance of God's laws, not everyone is able, not all can, not all want to observe these laws, therefore some remain excluded from God's love. But if one is taught the love of God, and the welcoming of his love, this is for everyone. So Jesus' work that develops throughout the gospel is that God cannot be brought to men, cannot be expressed, manifested through a doctrine because the doctrine from the same moment that it emanates becomes already old, it needs to be reinterpreted, translated. God manifests himself through love, the tenderness of God is the language that everyone can understand.

Well at the conclusion the evangelist had written that " his notoriety ", the notoriety of this novelty, "... spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town," And here is a marginalized person just because of religion. Sometimes religion can really be treacherous that we do not hesitate to define diabolic, what is this treachery ? Religion acclaims that certain people for their conduct, behaviour, situation are in sin, impure and therefore excluded from God. The only one that can cancel this impurity is God, but as they are in this situation they cannot turn to God for help. It is a situation without end and this is a tragedy of many people.

The evangelist presents us with an anonymous leper. When the evangelists present anonymous characters it means that they are representing something. This character represents a person that for his fault, at that time it was believed that leprosy was God's punishment for grave sins, and was in a situation of impurity. The only way to be free of this impurity was through God, but he, because of his impurity cannot communicate with God. So this leper had heard that Jesus does not ask to observe the laws of God, but to welcome the love of God because God's love is not given for the merits of the person, but for his needs.

The leper takes courage, comes up to Jesus and beseeching him says "*If you will, can make me clean.*" He does not ask to be healed, he wants that this blot taken away, this infamy that prevents him from communicating with God. Well Jesus' reaction is of profound compassion, The

compassion means to communicate life to those that do not have it, “..he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I will;.....” This fact that Jesus says “I will” means that the law does not express the will of God, but love expresses the will of God, and love heals.

, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.” Here the evangelist shows us a person that has no merit to be cleansed by God, but he has the need. So as it has been already said Jesus does not look for the merits in people but to their needs. Then Jesus sends him away, it is strange because it has not been said that it was an enclosed place, he sends him away straight away from what? Ideally from the place of the religious institution: this is what made him believe to be impure, to be excluded from God. God has never excluded you from his love, it was the religion, it was the institution, so you must go away from this.

At the end of this episode, the evangelist writes that the leper welcomed Jesus’ message “..he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news,” He is the first preacher in the Gospels.

The first preacher is a person who was marginalized and now announces, "the message", what is the message? No one person in the world needs to feel excluded from God’s love. God’s love knows no barriers, those limits that religion, sex, nationalism have imposed . This is what St. Peter will say once converted "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" ( Acts 10, 28). This is the good news that the former leper begins to proclaim everywhere.