

6th Sunday Ordinary Time

February 14-15, 2015

Readings: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45

Most people, if given their preference, would prefer not to “go it alone,” whether in life, in social situations, in family relationships or much of anything else. We are social creatures, and the communal nature of life is part of how we were made by our Creator.

St. John Chrysostom, an early Church writer, was not one to shy away from telling it like it is. He could be harsh, but the people knew he said what he did out of love for them. Once he remarked about those who tended to stay away from Church, claiming that they could be good Christians at home:

“You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests.”¹

The fact is, we are better and stronger when we are united than when we try to go it alone. But sometimes being part of a community brings with it many challenges, and we may well feel that we’d rather be separate. The lepers were separated from the community, though no fault of their own, by a horrific disease. Today’s Gospel reminds us that we must have a heart for those pushed aside in society.

Staying united in faith and in communion is a challenge these days. As a parish within this local Church, we form part of the particular Church of this Archdiocese, which in turn forms a small part of the universal Church. Sometimes the link seems strong, while at others, we feel perhaps very disconnected, frustrated, angry or hurt.

¹ John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili*, 3, 6

But the fact remains that none of us is an island– we do not answer to ourselves, but to God. There remain many needs here, some of which you heard about last week in the audio portion of the Catholic Services Appeal. Hospital and prison chaplains do not often figure on most peoples’ radars, but the work they do is critically important if the Church truly seeks to reach out to the peripheries. Supporting our mission in Venezuela, giving visible support closer to home in programs of evangelization– these initiatives are all funded by the Catholic Services Appeal.

Each of us has something to contribute; each of us is an important link in the chain. I close with a good portion of the beautiful prayer by Bl. John Henry Newman because, it speaks to the very core of what service means for each of us individually and collectively:

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me

 which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission—I never may know it in this life,

 but I shall be told it in the next.

Somehow I am necessary for His purposes...

I have a part in this great work;

I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection

 between persons.

He has not created me for naught. I shall do good,

 I shall do His work;

I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth

 in my own place, while not intending it,

 if I do but keep His commandments

 and serve Him in my calling.

 Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see—

I ask not to know—I ask simply to be used.²

² From *Meditations and Devotions*, "Hope in God–Creator", March 7, 1848