

February 18, 2018

IF YOU WISH YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN

As we enter the **40 days of Lent**, I invite you to reflect on the amazing miracle of Jesus: **the healing of a leper**. We may have never encountered a leper in our lifetime. But we are familiar with the works of St. Teresa of Calcutta and St. Damian of Molokai who had no fear to reach out to lepers. St. Damian was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. He was a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He had a missionary spirit and chose to devote many years serving lepers on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. In the end, he contracted leprosy himself, and continued to serve his fellow lepers spiritually until he died of the disease (April 15, 1889). Mother Teresa of Calcutta was also inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, whose encounter with lepers was part of his radical conversion to follow Jesus and help the poorest of the poor.

I have no doubt that those three great saints, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Damian of Molokai and St. Teresa of Calcutta, saw, in the suffering faces of lepers, the face of Jesus dying for all of us on the cross. I have no doubt that they were further inspired by Jesus' own encounters with lepers, and His healing them of this devastating disease. Just before entering in this **first week of Lent**, we too were blessed to hear the amazing encounter of Jesus with a leper (last weekend's Gospel-Mark 1:40-45). St Mark the Evangelist is always concise. He takes only three short sentences (three verses 40-42) to narrate this encounter: *A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said: "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean.*"

Can you imagine this brief encounter between Jesus and the leper? Imagine for a moment that you are the leper. You are the one who had been declared "**unclean**." You would have had to live in total isolation from society. Wherever you went, you would have had to shout: "**Unclean, unclean**," (Leviticus 13:44-46) in order to warn people to stay away from you. Yet, you had heard about Jesus. You believe that He can cure you! He is the **only one** who can cure you! You know that **if** you ask Jesus, He will respond to your prayer. So, you do not hesitate! You go to Him. You kneel down to Him and you simply ask: **Jesus, I am sick. I am a sinner. Heal me Lord! Thy will be done! Not my will, but thy will, Lord Jesus!** Then, you see Jesus stretching his hand toward you, and as he touches you, you are **healed!**

We are invited to meditate on our own relationship with Jesus. In today's world, we no longer have lepers walking our streets and shouting: Unclean, unclean! But in a spiritual way, each of us is a leper. Each of us is "unclean" through our sinfulness. Every sin separates us from Jesus.

In our own conversation with Jesus, we can ask him to help us identify the areas of our life that need to be changed. In those **40 Days of Lent**, Jesus, help me to turn radically toward you! Help me to break the chains that attach me to habitual sins! Help me to think less about myself, and more about **the other**, the one that you want me to help out during this Lent. Help me to deepen my prayer life! Help me to prepare to go back to confession, to avail myself of this great sacrament of Reconciliation! Jesus, help me to feel your love in my daily life, help me to return that love and to be fully **reconciled with you!**

As part of your individual spiritual journey, consider joining some of the many Lenten activities at our parish (see list on blue sheet in the narthex). We are blessed this year to have a four-day mission with Fr. David Gunter, Marian Priest of the Immaculate Conception. If you want to know more about him, just Google his name to discover part of his spiritual journey. Nothing can replace a face to face encounter such as this. Fr. Gunter will give us four one-hour talks on four consecutive days, beginning next Sunday. His first one at 3 pm, February 25, will be his "witness talk." Afflicted like the leper, he shares his story of triumph over a major illness. In his youth, he had been addicted to drugs. Yet, through the grace of God, he was able to **become "clean"** and to follow God's call to the priesthood. I hope you will be able to join me at each talk.

May God give each of us our best-ever Lent! May Mary, His Mother, keep and protect each of us and lead us to her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*One in Christ,
Fr. Alain*

First Sunday of Lent

CCD Class Schedule

Our Lady Help of Christians 2017-2018 CCD registration is open online: www.olhoc.org.

Feb. 18-19: No class during Presidents' Day Holiday

Feb. 25-26: Classes resume

In order for parents to attend the full Parish Mission, the First Communion Parent Workshop scheduled for Feb. 28, has been rescheduled to Wednesday, March 7 at 6:45 PM.

Contact **Therese Thiedeman** at 301-645-7112 or dre@olhoc.org

Due to Parish Mission

Next Parish Youth Night – February 25 3:00 to 5:30 PM

Life Teen: High school youth ministry

Edge: Middle school youth ministry (meets monthly)

FIAT: Elementary school Faith in Action Team (meets monthly)

For more information and youth opportunities, please visit www.olhoc.com/ym or contact Mrs. Marlen Coles marlen@olhoc.org.

Mass Intentions this Week

Saturday, Feb. 17, 9:00 AM: Segundina Padinit

Saturday, Feb. 17, 5:00 PM: Phillip Koscheka (+)

Sunday, Feb. 18, 8:30 AM: Father Pittman

Sunday, Feb. 18, 10:00 AM: OLHOC Parishioners

Sunday, Feb. 18, 11:30 AM: Mr. and Mrs. Norgren

Wednesday, Feb. 21, 9:00 AM: George Karotko (+)

Mass Readings for February 25, 2018

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 22: 1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18

Second Reading – Romans 8: 31-34

Gospel – Mark 9: 2-10

Prayer Requests *

We are asked to pray for: Jessica Holt, Sue Holt, Wilbur Etbauer, R. Todd Iddings, Michael Proctor, Nellie Lynch, Edmund Madden, Abigail Poole, Sarah Parker, Dennis Forgash, David DeMarr, Joseph Mason Proctor, David & Georgiana Norgren, Ann Garner, Larry McGraw, Cecilia Spinks, Chantelle Angelini, Sonia Knapp, Lynn & Ronald Henrion, Ebony Jenkins, Tina Gallagher-Detwiler, Judy Studds, Vincent Argiro, Sr., Pearl Green, Fr. Robert Pittman, and all our military and civilians serving in harm's way.

**Names will remain on our list for 3 months. Please call the parish office to re-request a name after 3 months or to remove a name when the person has regained health.*

**Cardinal's Appeal Envelopes
Available in the narthex thru February**

OUR LADY'S LITTLE CHRISTIANS

<http://www.olhoc.org/preschool.html>

Now Open – Registration for Fall 2018

For more information, send an email to preschool@olhoc.org or call the office and ask for Nieda, Preschool Director.

*** UPCOMING Child Protection Workshop ***

Mandatory for anyone who has contact with children at OLHOC. www.Virtus.org

St. Mary's School, Piscataway, Feb. 20 @ 6 p.m.

Community Outreach

The next **Shepherd's Table Dinner** will be held on **Thursday, March 15, 2018 at Good Shepherd Church**. Looking for menu planning help.

Next Outreach Committee Meeting is March 1 at 7PM – All are welcome!

Sharing Sunday is the first Sunday of the month. Food may be left in the Social Hall in boxes marked Food Donations.

Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother

An extraordinary study that reveals Mary's unique role in God's Kingdom and in our lives.

This Lent commit to attend our 5-part Bible Study (10-11:30 am): Thursdays, Feb 22, March 1,8,15 & 22 or Saturdays, Feb 24, March 3,10,17 & 24 or form a small group in a home at your convenience.

For more information see

<http://olhoc.com/lent-2018>

The Light is on for You!

Wednesday: February 21 & all Wednesdays in March - 6:00-6:45 PM, & 7:45-8:30 PM

Saturdays 4:00 PM

Sundays 6:30 PM

Parish Penance Service:

Tuesday, February 27 7:30 PM



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