



# Bringing Home the Word



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 15, 2015

## Look Beyond

By Janel Esker

“Unclean! Unclean!” That’s what lepers in the ancient Middle East called out when anyone came near them. They were required to alert others to their disease so they wouldn’t physically or ritually contaminate another person.

Can you imagine having to declare *out loud* what is wrong with you every time someone approached? It would be difficult enough to have to shout, “Common cold!” “Bladder infection!”

## Sunday Readings

### Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46

Moses and Aaron receive directions for dealing with lepers. Anyone with a scab or sore should be diagnosed by a priest, and if infected, remove himself or herself from the community.

### 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1

Paul places Christian behavior within the context of achieving the greater good, especially in regard to salvation. In bringing others joy and peace, we imitate and glorify God.

### Mark 1:40–45

Jesus heals a leper, warning him to remain quiet and to perform the required rituals. Instead, the man shares his experience publicly, and Jesus is overwhelmed with crowds.

“Schizophrenia!” But what if we also had to declare our moral failings to everyone we met? “Compulsive liar!” “Self-centered!” “Refuses to forgive!” “Judgmental!” Talk about an isolating experience.

This is what makes Jesus’ actions in the Gospel so remarkable. The original Greek translation of the phrase “moved with pity” indicates that Jesus was riveted in his soul by this man’s condition and his plea. Jesus touched the man, despite all rules to the contrary, and healing occurred. He reached through all the barriers, the boundaries, the uncleanness, and loved this man for the person he was—beyond all that was wrong with him.

Jesus does this for us, too—he sees beyond our sin, beyond our selfishness, beyond our patterns of bad behavior. He loves us for who we are at our very core, made in God’s own image. So the challenge for us is to do the same. Saint Paul impels us to be imitators of Christ. Though our first instinct may be to see the sinfulness of others, the irritations of family members, and the faults of coworkers, we must look beyond the failings and see with the eyes of Christ. We must touch with Christ’s hands and love with Christ’s heart—nothing less is expected of us. †

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Where in my life am I unclean, sinful, or isolated? Am I afraid or hesitant to approach anyone or ask for the healing I need?
- How can I bring myself and others to Christ this week?

## PRAYER

Lord, you call us to leave everything and follow you.

Help me detach from the securities of life and trust in doing your work of healing and reconciliation in the world.

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

# St. Valentine and the Message of *Caritas*

By Fr. Stephen T. Rehrauer, CSSR

Love for God and neighbor is the heart of Christian ethics. We are recognized as disciples because we love one another. The parables of the Good Samaritan and final judgment remind us that we will be judged by whether we have moved beyond our own needs to a tangible love for others.

Greek philosophy describes two kinds of love: *eros* and *agape*. *Eros* is attraction. It is a romantic love, a love that brings joy to the one who is loving, a love of possession. Loving the other meets my needs, makes me happy, fulfills me.

*Agape*, translated as *caritas* in Latin, looks beyond how the loved one makes me feel or what the loved one does for me. It seeks what is best for the other and wants the other to be happy, regardless of whether love is returned. Scripture rarely uses *eros* to refer to love. *Agape* is the preferred concept. *Agape* is the way God loves—the love of Christ on the cross.

*Eros* is good and natural; it leads us beyond ourselves and joins us to others (as in marriage and family). But *eros* cannot sustain itself. No human being can ever fully satisfy us. As any married couple learns, unless *eros* leads to *caritas*, the relationship cannot last. Every Christian family is called to become a school of love, a place where *caritas* is learned and lived.

Valentine's Day is meant to teach us the value of *caritas*. Saint Valentine taught and converted the young blind



daughter of his jailor. While being led away to be martyred, he reminded her to cultivate the *caritas* of the Lord.

So when we say, “Be my Valentine,” we are asking that person to teach us to love as God loves—true love. †

## Bioethics: Eugenics

By Fr. Mark Miller, CSSR

Years ago, friends of mine experienced distress when, during a prenatal checkup, the doctor suggested that the wife have amniocentesis. She was thirty-three but the doctor argued, “Usually this test is offered for all pregnant women over thirty-five because the chances of having a Down syndrome child increase with age.”

“What would happen if the test showed a Down syndrome child?” asked the husband. “Well,” said the doctor, “I

could then book you for an abortion.” The devout couple was horrified but ultimately had the test, and the results were negative. The still-angry wife said that the two-week wait for the results was a nightmare. She changed obstetricians.

Doctors argue that “doing their job” includes informing patients of their “choices.” The recommendation that all pregnant women, regardless of age, be offered genetic screening is increasingly common. The implication is that a pregnancy in which any genetic anomaly is discovered can be “terminated” and the couple can avoid the “burden” of a disabled child.

The destruction of the unwanted has grown steadily since abortion was legalized, and I observe eugenics today in the form of playing on people's fears. I'd like to offer some supportive advice. First, parents do not *need* to undergo any genetic tests. If the only “option” offered is abortion to “solve the problem,” then just refuse. Ultrasound and other tests may reveal anomalies, and that may help you prepare.

Second, recognize that every child is a gift from God, not a product to be manipulated by our wants. I know the parents of an anencephalic child who loved their daughter for the three days she was given to them and still celebrate her presence in their family. I also quote Kevin Rollason, a reporter who wrote about his daughter who has Down syndrome: “Mary is a child and not a burden....We wanted a perfect child and we received a perfect child. Why would a parent not love her?”

†

## WEEKDAY READINGS

February 15–21

Mon. Genesis 4:1–15, 25 / Mark 8:11–13  
Tue. Seven Holy Founders: Genesis 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mark 8:14–21  
Wed. Ash Wednesday: Joel 2:12–18 / 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2 / Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Thu. Thursday after Ash Wednesday: Deuteronomy 30:15–20 / Luke 9:22–25  
Fri. Friday after Ash Wednesday: Isaiah 58:1–9 / Matthew 9:14–15  
Sat. St. Peter Damian: Isaiah 58:9–14 / Luke 5:27–32