

Reflection for Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time by Ewelina Frackowiak

Leviticus 13.1-2, 45-46; 1 Corinthians 10.31-11.1; Mark 1.40-45

What makes a leper unclean? Is it leprosy? No, leprosy is just an illness that has its symptoms but certainly no power to force anyone to shave his head and scream “unclean” whenever he is in proximity to others. The illness is one thing; the judgement another. The leper is not responsible for reactions and feelings that arise in those who are in his presence. How come in Jesus’s that feeling was compassion, whereas in those who wrote down the laws in Leviticus it was fear?

I imagine the healing in today’s gospel being twofold: first Jesus erased the harsh judgement which the leper must have internalized. “Be made clean!” Then he healed him from leprosy. It happened in two stages - just as with the healing of a paralytic, remember, the lucky fellow who was lowered on his bed straight from a roof of a crowded house to Jesus’ feet.<sup>1</sup> Jesus said to him first: “your sins are forgiven”. In other words: You are released from the grip that your own judgement has on you, you are released from the judgement that prevented you from loving yourself and from loving others. Only after Jesus said that, he healed the man from paralysis.

Is there something that you consider a quality of yourself and that you are ashamed of? Your personal leper. If that disliked quality is related to an emotion, that is, if you think that you are an angry person, a jealous person, or a fearful person, for example, consider dropping the judgement about these emotions and whenever it is possible stay with them without reacting. If there is a story line that emerges alongside your emotion, let us say you begin thinking that you are a victim and the whole world is a vicious and loveless place because your co-worker or friend insulted you, recognize this story simply as a creation of your mind and go back to the feeling. When you drop the story line, the feeling itself will dissolve and you will build up the courage to face yourself fully. Whatever the leper represents in you is, is NOT unclean, is NOT shameful.

Our ability to reach out and love is very much related to the way we view ourselves.<sup>2</sup> The more you are open and fearless when facing yourself, the more you are open and fearless when facing each moment of your life. Because you know your desires, your jealousy, your self-pity, etcetera, you do not run away whenever with an encounter with someone else these feelings emerge. You recognize that others are

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 5.17-26

<sup>2</sup> Trungpa, Chögyam.2010. *Smile at Fear*. Shambhala.

not responsible for the feelings of dislike or anger that arose in you in their presence. You have the courage to be fully out there – with other people - because you are fully in there – with yourself.

The emotions we tend to avoid, burry under the business of our life, are our great teachers. The feelings of inadequacy, deficiency and futility, if not swept out into the unconscious, can lead us into recognizing that we are part of wholeness, spaciousness, which is imbued with all the qualities we seemed to be missing.<sup>3</sup> Anytime you encounter these feelings, be grateful. They are very precious guests in the banquet of life. They will widen your heart until there is a room for every living creature.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Maitri Sandra. 2000. *The Spiritual Dimension of the Enneagram. Nine Faces of the Soul*. Jeremy P. Tarcher / Putnam, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> de Mello, Anthony. 1991. "Bring in the Poor". In *The Way to Love*. Image, p. 27-30.