

## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

America has become increasingly divided. Our differing opinions exemplify this. I have my opinions; you have your opinions; we all have opinions.

Not only that, but media sites, radio and TV shows have opinions, too. Have you noticed? We tend to choose to watch the news we agree with, because they affirm our opinions. The idea is that we know are right, and the media sites we watch tells us we are right. So we must be right... right? Or are we?

The reason I mention this is to ask: When it comes to forming our opinions, who do we listen to: ourselves, others, the media sites that agree with us..... or Jesus and His church, guided by the Holy Spirit?

In today's Gospel reading we hear of a person who begs Jesus for His healing touch. He is a leper.

Leprosy was one of the most reviled diseases in the time of Christ. The person with leprosy endured:

1. A horrible disfiguring of their appearance.
2. Rejection by society due to fear of it being very contagious.
3. Isolation for a lifetime.

Almost everybody in the time of Christ was of the opinion that leprosy was easily transmitted from one to another. Was their opinion correct?

No. It was later learned that leprosy is not easily transmitted. But in the time of Christ this was not understood. It was thought of as being a disease that was easily caught from another. That is why, in our first reading, we heard the requirement that a leper needed to walk down the street yelling the words, "Unclean! Unclean!" It would be bad enough having the disease, but can you imagine having to do that? And the thought that they attributed the disease with being a sinner made it all the worse.

Yet, when the man with leprosy came to Jesus in our Gospel asking for healing, not only did Jesus heal him, but Jesus, "had pity on him, stretched out his hand, and touched him."

Jesus touched the leper! At that time, that was not to be done! Did Jesus allow the opinions of society to dictate how He should respond to the leper? NO! Jesus, the Son of God, acted out of love and met the person's need. He touched him, and he healed him with the words, "Be made clean." The opinions of society did not dissuade Jesus from acting out of love.

You see, the only opinion that matters, is Jesus' opinion. It is the only one that lasts. It is His opinion, plus the teachings of the Church regarding faith and morals, that should guide us in forming our opinions.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you are like me you can find yourself all wrapped up in the opinions of many media sites. You can sit and wonder what the world is coming to. Not that news is unimportant, but it can tend to pose an obstacle to our faith in Christ by making us feel that the world is so messed up that there is no hope.

But there is always hope in Jesus! How can we unplug from all of the opinions of the world and learn more of the opinions of Jesus?

Well, I have good news! As you entered today you may have picked up a little white card about activities that are available to you this coming Lent, which begins this Wednesday, Ash Wednesday. There are many, but I will name a few:

First, we will be handing out on Ash Wednesday a book entitled, "Perfectly Yourself" by Mathew Kelly. It is a book which calls us to think again about our lives and consider the direction we are being called to go by God. In it we have a chance to reshape our opinions about ourselves and receive direction for lives towards God's will for us.

Second, we have a great opportunity is being offered for scripture study here at St. Elizabeth's. It is called "The Great Adventure: Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible" and begins next Sunday evening. What an excellent opportunity to learn about God's opinions! I'm signed up and hope you will as you leave at the table in our entrance area.

Finally we have a fantastic musician here with us! John Angotti is here for a concert (Sunday) tonight and to lead a parish renewal tomorrow and Tuesday. Again, another opportunity for us to be challenged to align our opinions with our Lord's and His church.

We all have opinions and need to be respectful of the opinions of others. But the opinion of the one who's image hangs upon this cross (point to the cross) and the opinion of His Church on matters of faith and morals means everything, because it is the only one that will last.

When it comes to opinions, who do you listen to? Yourself, others, the media that agrees with you..... or Jesus and His Church?