



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Father Michael Brunner
Homily at School Mass, January 8, 2010

Reading I 1 Jn 5:5-13

Beloved:
Who indeed is the victor over the world
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and Blood, Jesus Christ,
not by water alone, but by water and Blood.
The Spirit is the one who testifies,
and the Spirit is truth.
So there are three who testify,
the Spirit, the water, and the Blood,
and the three are of one accord.
If we accept human testimony,
the testimony of God is surely greater.
Now the testimony of God is this,
that he has testified on behalf of his Son.
Whoever believes in the Son of God
has this testimony within himself.
Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar
by not believing the testimony God has given about his Son.
And this is the testimony:
God gave us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.
Whoever possesses the Son has life;
whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you so that you may know
that you have eternal life,
you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

Gospel Lk 5:12-16

It happened that there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where Jesus was;
and when he saw Jesus,
he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said,
“Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean.”
Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said,
“I do will it. Be made clean.”
And the leprosy left him immediately.



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Then he ordered him not to tell anyone, but
“Go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing
what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.”

The report about him spread all the more,
and great crowds assembled to listen to him
and to be cured of their ailments,
but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

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Welcome back from a snow day.

The day before snow days are always interesting. Students who never speak to me are very friendly and ask with broad smiles “Are we having a snow day tomorrow” or “At what time will you decide to call of school.”

Even the monks were asking me on Wednesday night in the same tone of voice “Will we have school tomorrow.” To which I replied, as I did to the students.... first we need to have snow !!!”

That’s when Br. Dunstan told me he had his classes in the Junior school praying for snow in Latin. I told him to share that prayer with Fr Ambrose.

Anyway it, worked. We had snow.

This all reminds me of when I became headmaster and students would ask me whether this or that would change, would we still have a dress code, would we build a swimming pool ...and then tell me “But now you’re headmaster...you can do whatever you want. If you want to, you can do it.”

It’s not that way at all, of course. First you need something to work with, like snow.

Likewise in the Gospel today. We really miss the full power of this dramatic incident of healing beyond just the miracle itself.

A sick man approached Jesus; we hear he is FULL of leprosy. This is not someone with a touch of it, or in the initial stages. He is full of it and leprosy being what it is this person would look horrendous, and surely smell horrendous, like something from a horror movie, at whose approach anyone and everyone would run away, leprosy being so contagious. Lepers could only live with lepers, far outside and away from any normal people, town, city or village.

This hopeless case approaches Jesus, who does not run away. So the leper falls on the ground right in front of Jesus and what he says tells us that he is not hopeless: he has faith and hope in Jesus...who has only just begun his public ministry.



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He says: if you want to, you can make me clean.

There is the snow, to work with. Jesus, who being God can do whatever he wants, now can heal this man, because this man, who has nothing left in his life, whose very body is being eaten away before his eyes, has faith in his only hope, God.

Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Jesus, since he is God and can do whatever he wants, could just say “You are healed” and the man in front of him would have been cured. Jesus worked even long distance miracles, such as healing the servant of the Roman centurion. His word would have been enough to heal the leprosy. But Jesus would do more, more than the man asked.

Jesus makes it clear that he himself is truly human, thinks and feels as a human person and recognizes a human person in front of him, even if other human beings think the Leper is inhuman and the living dead.

Jesus speaks to him. He takes him seriously and answers him reassuringly. Jesus says; I DO want to heal you. And then Jesus does something unthinkable for his time and place. He reaches out and TOUCHES the leper. We can never know how long it had been since any person in normal society spoke to this man never mind touched him, but it would have been a very LONG time because he was FULL of leprosy. But Jesus touched him.

At that very moment there must have been gasps or screams from the people watching from a safe distance . But that touch, that simple human act, cured not only the man’s body but also his literally excommunicated spirit. He literally made him whole and holy. This incident is the description of a very real sacrament.

Jesus gives us more than we dare ask, if there is snow - if we believe and trust in Him, we conquer the world.

And St John in the first reading tells us, there are three who testify, the Spirit, the water, and the Blood.

The spirit is the breath, life and love of God which gave life and existence to the chaotic nothingness described in the book of Genesis as an abyss of water. And that same spirit of God comes to us through the water the water of baptism from which we are reborn, recreated to participate in the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which we remember and celebrate together here this morning. This is our sacrament of nourishment, of healing, of conquest of the world.

We don’t like to think of ourselves as very much like that leper, But we are –each of us – full of some leprosy, some of something that keeps us from fully realizing and



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participating fully in the very life of God which He offers us and which we receive in the Eucharist. We are all full of some sin.

We recoil from that word; we use euphemisms. But we get full of real sin, that missing the whole point of our life and existence, to love God and each other and contribute with our lives to building His kingdom in which is our only true happiness.

Each of us in the pit of our spirit has the seeds of some forbidden fruit that can take root and entrap us in its spreading branches. Each of us is full of a secret wish to build our own kingdom, and that wish bursts out in each of our lives like a sore or disease, like leprosy. It may not be so obvious as with the man in the Gospel. Our nose hasn't fallen off, our fingers haven't rotted away, we are not wrapped in bandages, but designer clothing. But we too are lepers.

The Spirit, the water and the blood testify to that also. The spirit... that we deflect, avoid or even run from when we ignore or look away or turn aside from the needs of others in order to enrich ourselves, or maintain our own comfort, or protect our own time and space. Avoiding the Spirit is a sin of our time and culture.

The water testifies that we have so often failed to uphold what was promised for us, or what we ourselves promised at our Baptism to reject and avoid the glamour of evil, all those works of evil, sin and broken-ness.

And the blood, the movement of which is life and carries life, the blood sacrificed for us, of Jesus Christ, the blood offered to us in the Eucharist, the blood that that can flow in and through us. It testifies.

I think of this at every Eucharist. I see people who genuflect before the tabernacle, who worship at Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, who bow and say "AMEN" when they receive the host reverently, and who then walk past, avoid, ignore, do not acknowledge or reverence, who never receive from the cup of the Lord the same real presence of Jesus Christ.

We are many things; We are more and we have times when we are our best selves, yet we can all be so much greater. But we are still lepers and our leprosy keeps coming back; we need all the miraculous presence, all the divine human touch, all the healing we can get. It is not hopeless for us... Jesus will do more for us than we even ask; although we even do not dare ask enough... because we think God will act and react like us.

It seems so little, but all we need to bring to God, is that snow, our faith and trust in Jesus Christ and what He can do.



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We inadvertently, in our humanness, make God small when He became human specifically to make us more, to make our hearts, our aspirations and our spirits big just like his.

It's a New Year. God is here. Let's live large.