



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



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01.11.08

We are still in Epiphany week. Yesterday I offered Mass at Linda Vista grade school. When I asked if anyone knew what epiphany meant, an eighth grader answered “an idea.” That wasn’t the answer I expected, but he was right. We talk about having an epiphany, which means something suddenly becomes clear to us, like a revelation. Epiphany with a capital E means the revelation of Jesus as king of the nations on the day when Magi came from pagan countries to adore him. An epiphany is any way God shows himself to men. So in today’s Gospel Jesus’ cure of the leper was an epiphany, a manifestation of his divine power and love on earth.

Lepers were repulsive and ostracized. The story about Jesus healing one is something you have to face and make a decision about. Did he do it? The evidence is pretty strong. If he did, then God has manifested himself in the world in this man Jesus. No one else has cured a leper by willing it and touching him. Jesus cured this leper to show that he had divine power over creation. Once you’ve heard that story and the other stories about Jesus, you have to make up your mind: is he from God, is he the Son of God or not? Is he God reaching out to you to give you life? We can sit on the fence about the question, but in fact we answer it by the way we live. If we buy the divine nature of Jesus, then the meaning of our life changes. If he is God, and if healing lepers and other sick people was a sign that he would kill our greatest enemy which is death, then he has given us the greatest gift we could wish for, life that is eternal joy because it is eternal friendship with the one who made us out of love. If that gift is ours simply by our accepting it, then there is no greater gift we could possibly receive. We have been given eternal life. To settle for anything less would be unworthy of us.

Your parents thought this gift was so wonderful that they accepted it on your behalf at your baptism and saw that it was nourished in holy communion. But as you grow up and begin to understand the world, the Lord invites you to make the decision for yourself. You have to appropriate the gift you have been given: that means make it your own. You have to say do I want the gift Jesus has given me? Do I want eternal life? If your answer is yes, then you will continue to come to the sacraments on your own, because you want God, not just because you’re expected to. I want to encourage you to think through the questions I have asked, and if your decision is that Jesus is the Son of God, the hand of God reached out to you in love, then be faithful to that decision no matter what, whatever peer pressure there may be from a world caught up in material things and pleasures which are good but which don’t last. Be faithful to the tough decision to accept eternal life from Jesus. Come to him in the sacraments even when it involves sacrifice.



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If you do that there's a bonus. You'll find yourself becoming stronger, more focused in your life. You've chosen the one who gives eternal life and already in this life you experience unexpected joy and strength. You begin to see the world as Jesus sees it, with love for each person. You become empowered to give yourself for others, to make a difference. You find that your weaknesses and sins are still there but something stronger is also there which helps you overcome them. The leprosy that is sin is healed by the risen Lord when you rely on him. "Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" You will be able to say with St. Paul, "I will glory in my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may remain over me." In the power of Jesus you become one who doesn't just take from life but gives to it.

In your prayer every day thank God for his infinite friendship and ask him to make you his worthy disciple. Then you will not just find happiness for yourself but will be the cause of happiness for others. Nothing is more fulfilling than that, nothing is more human than that, nothing is more divine than that.