

The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ, February 14, 2021

SOCIALLY DISTANCED



Our present circumstances with dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, give us some understanding of the situation of the leper and also of the surprising action of Jesus in Sunday's Gospel.

Rather than telling the leper to stay away, Jesus allows the leper to approach him. He does not demand that the leper remain socially distant and speak to him from afar. Kneeling before Jesus, the man begs for a cure.

Rather than responding only with words, Jesus touches the leper. As we are told, "moved with pity, he stretched out his hand (and) touched him." Jesus breaks the taboo that forbade contact with anyone who was unclean. By his action, Jesus restored the man's health

and in doing so allowed him to resume contact with the community.

We can relate to the story of the leper not just because of the impact of COVID-19, that story also tells us about the effects of sin.

Sin is a "virus" that distorts our dignity as children of God. It harms our relationship with others. It hinders the coming of God's kingdom. It makes us imperfect witnesses to the truth of the Gospel. It darkens our lives and adds to the darkness in our society. In a word, sin makes us unclean. It makes us spiritual lepers.

But rather than avoiding us "lepers" and remaining distant, God reaches out to us in Jesus. He touches us with his healing and forgiveness and brings us back into a relationship with him and with his Church.

If we were only as conscious of the harmful effects of sin as we are of the harm caused by the coronavirus, we would readily seek out the "vaccine" that Jesus offers us in his Sacraments and through his Church.

Attentively at your service in our Lord,

Father John Carlos