

## Prepare with Prayer

*You (LORD) are my hiding place!  
 You protect me from trouble  
 and you put songs in my heart  
 because you have saved me.  
 You said to me,  
 "I will point out the road  
 that you should follow.  
 I will be your teacher  
 and watch over you."  
 Psalm 32:7-8*

### Today's Readings

1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1  
 Psalm 32:1, 5ab, 11  
 Mark 1:40-45

*.....  
 Jesus calls us to be kind to everyone, especially  
 those who are different from us.*

Jesus, however, never stood on ceremony or worried about his own welfare when faced with someone in need. As Jesus' followers today, we must ask ourselves: Have *we* touched any lepers lately?

## Scripture Background

"I can do whatever I want as long as no one else gets hurt!" Today's First Reading holds Christians to a much higher moral standard than the one reflected in this statement.

Paul says that literally *everything* the Corinthians do should glorify God. Not only should they never harm their neighbors but also, to the greatest extent possible, they should help their neighbors and even please them.

That is, after all, how Jesus lived his life. Every single person was important to him, whether healthy or ill, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, man or woman. Everyone was a VIP.

Jesus' unconditional love included the leper he cures in today's Gospel. In those days, the term *leprosy* covered a wide range of skin diseases, from mild to serious, all of which produced the same social consequences.

Lepers weren't allowed to enter towns or otherwise to interact with healthy people until they were cured. If that happened, they had to visit a priest for an elaborate cleansing ritual, and the priest alone could declare them free to reenter society.

Strictly speaking, Jesus should not have touched the leper. Doing so violated Jewish purity laws and put his own health at risk (or so it was thought). Onlookers believed that Jesus had contaminated himself.

## "Don't Tell Anyone"

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus often heals someone, then asks the person not to tell anyone about it. Scholars call this aspect of Mark "the Messianic secret."

In 1901, German scholar Wilhelm Wrede speculated that perhaps Jesus downplayed his mighty deeds because he did not in fact see himself as the Messiah. Expressing the consensus of Catholic scholars, Raymond E. Brown pronounces that viewpoint "most implausible" on page 79 of his book *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (1994).

Brown adds that our Lord's main concern was probably the political expectations that some would impose on him if they learned his true identity too soon in his career of preaching and healing.

Despite some people's fondest hopes—usually arising from a misreading of biblical prophecy—Jesus knew that his messianic mission would not include "establishing an earthly kingdom, conquering foreign rulers, or functioning as an earthly ruler" (p. 79).

## Relationship to Children

Today's readings offer a good opportunity to discourage children from treating any other child like a leper or an outcast. It is usually in groups, not as individuals, that children victimize other children, and even the nicest members of a group may join in, much to the surprise of the people who know them best, including their parents and teachers.

The habit of forming cliques begins as early as kindergarten, and unfortunately, some cliques end up teasing and bullying the most vulnerable of their peers. Which children are usually the targets of teasing? Judith Caprez, associate professor and director of social work at Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas, offers a list: children with developmental or physical disabilities, those with emotional problems, children without the latest clothing styles or the newest toys, children who are naturally shy and insecure.

If the bullying is left unchecked, Caprez adds, these children go on to develop other problems. Their grades may fall. They may become sick or depressed. They may have trouble eating or sleeping. Making and keeping friends can become difficult. Last and perhaps worst, they may seek revenge on their attackers or vent rage against someone weaker or younger than themselves. ("Bullied children must be helped," the *Hays Daily News*, March 25, 2002)

"Children can be cruel," the old adage goes, but that's no reason to let children live, unchallenged, by the laws of the jungle. They must learn respect and empathy for the very persons they are most likely to mistreat. (For more information, visit these websites: [bullying.org](http://bullying.org) and [Bullies2Buddies.com](http://Bullies2Buddies.com).)

## Children's Leaflet

Reaching out to help the lonely or the left out is this week's suggestion for families. The puzzle calls for the children to pay close attention to the directions and to the message they uncover.

Or on a large sheet of paper, have children use colored construction paper or index cards to make a sign for the Gospel. If you have the time and means, consider the following long-range preparation:

With two teenagers, rehearse a short skit portraying today's Gospel, so that you can substitute their enactment for the reading. The teens playing Jesus and the leper will memorize the lines of dialogue in Mark 1:40-45.

When the leper finishes the story, he or she will be completely covered by a blanket. After being cured, the leper will throw off the blanket and stare in amazement at arms, hands, and body.

When Jesus and the leper are finished speaking, you, acting as narrator, will read aloud the Gospel's final verse, Mark 1:45.

## Music

See page 62 for more information.

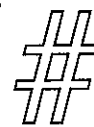
**Gathering:** "Gather Us In" by Marty Haugen (*Singing Our Faith*. GIA)

**Psalm:** "Psalm 32: I Turn to You" by Rory Cooney (*Psalms for the Church Year*. GIA)

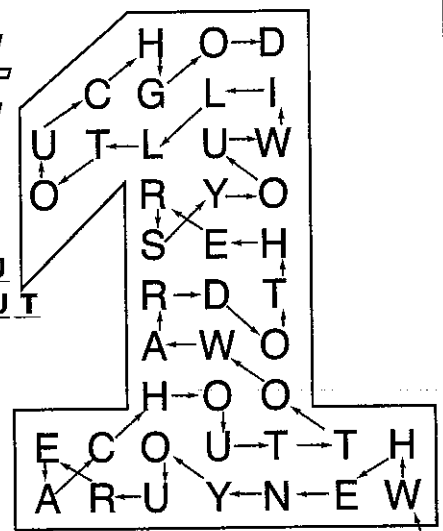
**Gospel Acclamation:** "Alleluia" by Steve Angrisano

### Who's First?

Who's first in your life? Make a "Number 1" symbol with your index finger. Who is it pointing to? Now use your index finger to follow the arrows. Write the message on the lines below.



WHENYOU  
REACHOU  
TOWARD  
OTHERS,  
YOU  
WILL  
TOUCH  
GOD.



START

# Order of worship

## Gathering

When the Gathering song has ended, call the children's attention to the letters VIP on display and pose these questions:

- Who knows what these three letters are?
- What do they mean?
- Can you name some VIPs in today's world?
- If a VIP asks for a special favor, how do other people usually respond?

Tell the children that you will say more about VIPs a little later in the liturgy.

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** Please bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Heavenly Father, we have our own ideas about which people on earth are VIPs. But who do *you* think is a VIP? Help us to learn your ways as we listen to your holy word today. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

## First Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1

**Leader:** Long ago, Saint Paul started a new Christian church in a busy seaport town called Corinth. Because all different kinds of people lived there, they didn't always get along. In today's reading, Paul gives them some good advice about how to avoid problems.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The word of the Lord

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Psalm: Psalm 32:1, 5ab, 11

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the Psalm, sing or announce the response. (If using a sung response, see Music.)

**Leader:** I turn to you in time of trouble.

**Children:** I turn to you in time of trouble.

## Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

## Proclaim the Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

**Leader:** Do you know what Paul was really saying in that First Reading? Treat *everyone* like a VIP! This was what Jesus always did. In today's Gospel, Jesus meets a leper, somebody with a bad skin disease that everybody else avoided. Notice how Jesus acts when he meets the leper.

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**Children:** And with your spirit.

**Leader:** A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

**Children:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Homily

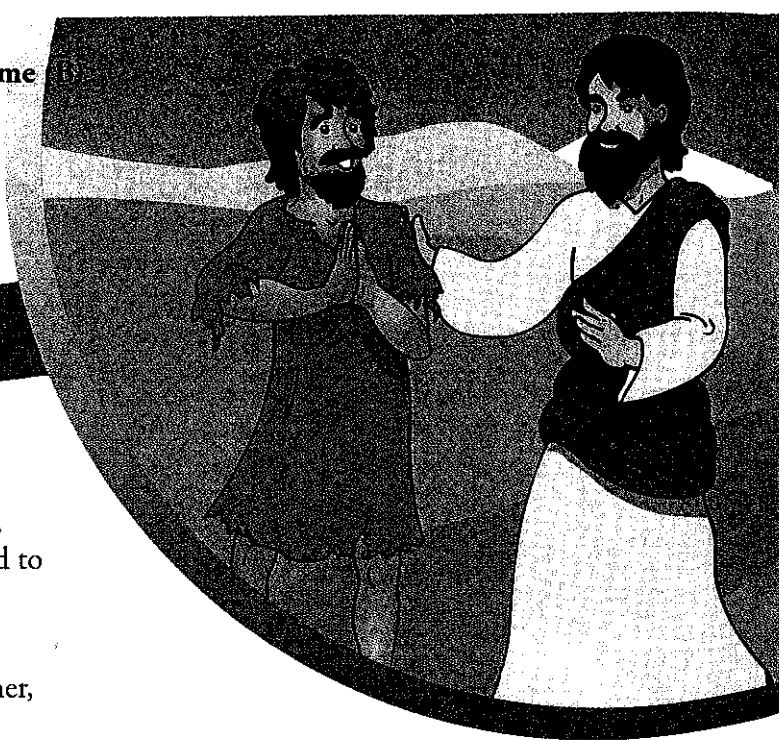
Base a Homily on the following questions and ideas.

- Other people would have told the leper to go away; what did Jesus say?
- Other people would not have let the leper come near them; what did Jesus do?
- How do you suppose the leper felt when other people always ran away from him?
- How did he feel when Jesus didn't?

Jesus set an example for *us* to follow: we should never "gang up" against people who are different from us. For example, should children be teased if they:

- are smaller or bigger than other children their age?
- don't wear the latest styles or own the newest toys?
- learn faster or slower than other children?
- have speech impairments or other problems?
- never play sports or don't play them very well?
- are very shy and seldom talk?

Remember, to Jesus all these children are VIPs.



## Profession of Faith

**Leader:** Please stand now, join hands, and form a circle. In our circle, we symbolize all God's people, together in love, with no one left out. Please respond to each prayer question with, "Yes, I do."

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, our loving Father, who loves all his children and thinks each one is special?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus, God's only Son, who treated everyone like a VIP?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who brings people together in unity and peace?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the holy, Catholic Church, begun by Christ to be a community of love?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** We are the Church of Christ, but sometimes we are not a community of love. We do not treat others like the VIPs that they really are. Today, let's pray to the Holy Spirit for unity and healing. Our response to each petition will be, "Come, O Healing Spirit."

**Children:** Come, O Healing Spirit.

**Leader:** For the Holy Father and all leaders of the Church, that God's Spirit will fill them with love for everyone in their care, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Come, O Healing Spirit.

**Leader:** For all the people of our town and parish, that God's Spirit will fill us with love for one another, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Come, O Healing Spirit.

**Leader:** For all children who have been teased or bullied, that God's Spirit will fill them with comfort and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Come, O Healing Spirit.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

**Leader:** Lord, sometimes it is hard to be good. But with the help of your Holy Spirit, we know we can be everything you want us to be. Help us to grow in love for all people, especially those who are different from us. This we ask through Christ, our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

## Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families.

**72B SIXTH SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

**FIRST READING**

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

**A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians**

**Brothers and sisters:**

**When you eat or drink or do anything else,  
always do it to honor God.**

**Don't cause problems for Jews or Greeks  
or anyone else who belongs to God's church.**

**I always try to please others instead of myself,  
in the hope that many of them will be saved.  
You must follow my example,  
as I follow the example of Christ.**

**The word of the Lord.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

Psalm 32:1, 5ab, 11

**R/. (7a) I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble.**

**Our God, you bless everyone  
whose sins you forgive and wipe away.**

**R/. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble.**

**So I confessed my sins  
and told them all to you.**

**R/. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble.**

**And so your good people  
should celebrate and shout.**

**R/. I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble.**

**ALLELUIA**

Luke 7:16

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

**A great prophet has appeared among us;  
God has visited his people.**

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

Mark 1:40-45 The leprosy left him, and he was cured.

✠ A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark

**A man with leprosy came to Jesus and kneeled down.  
He begged, "You have the power to make me well,  
if only you wanted to."**

**Jesus felt sorry for the man.**

**So he put his hand on him and said, "I want to!**

**Now you are well."**

**At once the man's leprosy disappeared,  
and he was well.**

**After Jesus strictly warned the man,  
he sent him on his way.**

**He said, "Don't tell anyone about this.**

**Just go and show the priest that you are well.**

**Then take a gift to the temple as Moses commanded,  
and everyone will know that you have been healed."**

**The man talked about it so much and told so many people,  
that Jesus could no longer go openly into a town.**

**He had to stay away from the towns,**

**but people still came to him from everywhere.**

**The gospel of the Lord.**