

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, February 11, 2024
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

A couple asked me to officiate their wedding in a location quite far from the parish where I was assigned. I asked the man why the venue had to be distant from our place. He replied, "It has been my girlfriend's dream to have a garden setting wedding. And the church in that place is surrounded by a lush garden. I want to make her happy. I want only the best for her". This is the meaning of true love. We know it is love when we learn how to prioritize what is best for the other and not for ourselves.

The same love is obvious in today's Gospel. Notice the exchange in the conversation between Jesus and the leper. The leper came to Jesus with a very humble request: If you wish, you can make me clean. He wanted to be healed of his malady and its stigma. He was resigning himself into the hands of the Lord. But in a subtle way, he was telling Jesus that he believed in his love for the poor and the sick. In his heart, the leper knew Jesus did not want him to be a leper forever. Jesus is the groom, whose priority is the bride.

Today's Gospel is a lesson in optimism in our spiritual life. Too often, we have a distorted view of God. Some people believe that God is the author of their misery, or that God wants them to suffer and languish in poverty, sickness, and bad fate. In our minds and hearts, we suspect that God is the villain who oppresses us, or the indifferent God who does not care.

The leper shows us how to approach the Lord. When we come before the Lord, we need to start with the positive mind-set in prayer. We must declare that our God is the God of all good things. And his desire is only for the good of his children. The formula of the leper is instructive to us: If you wish, you can make me clean. In his heart he knew that it is Jesus's

wish to heal and restore him. And he claimed that miracle in his heart before Jesus even performed it for him.

Dear friends, God wants only the best for you and me. God desires only that which is constructive and uplifting for our lives. But how do we explain all the sickness, the pain, and the suffering of this life? Where do all these come from? Certainly, not from the hands of the Lord. The original plan of God was for the good of his creation. And today, the plan still holds. It has not changed.

If we analyze the evils around us, we will have to accept that most of these come from men and women in their selfishness and neglect. God allows these things to happen because he respects human freedom. In some cases, bad things happen so that we will learn from our experiences and mistakes. In others, we can see that even the negative experiences can lead to a return to the Lord and his plans. Our faith proclaims that evil does not come from God. God's design is only to heal, to support, to restore, and to build up.

Today, the Lord wants us to learn a lesson in trust and confidence in his love and concern for our good. When we pray, when we act, let us not start with doubts. Rather, let us set out with a strong belief in the goodness of the Lord and in his design for our well-being. Miracles of healing and restoration will take place when we begin to see in God the one who loves us sincerely.