



St James – A shining light in Petts Wood



ST JAMES THE GREAT

Briefly

Weekly Newsletter

11th February 2024

Sixth Sunday



Fr David Says.....

In the mid-80s, HIV/Aids terrified the world because of a lack of understanding as well as misinformation. In April 1987, Princess Diana at the height of the AIDS pandemic opened the UK's first specialist HIV/AIDS unit at London's

Middlesex Hospital, a space that would exclusively care for patients with the virus. Whilst visiting the unit, she famously noted, "HIV does not make people dangerous to know. You can shake their hands and give them a hug. Heaven knows that they need it. What's more you can share their homes, their workplaces and their playgrounds and toys." In front of the world's media, Princess Diana shook the hand of man suffering with the illness. She did so without gloves, publically challenging the notion that HIV/AIDS was passed from person to person by touch. She showed in a single gesture that this was a condition needing compassion and understanding, not fear and ignorance. For people living with HIV, her comments marked the start of her monumental efforts to see them treated with dignity, respect and compassion. And through her actions, she showed everyone else that HIV cannot be passed through day to day contact. Of course, it didn't change everything overnight and abhorrent stigma and discrimination remain even today, but the Princess's impact was felt everywhere. HIV/AIDS was the new leprosy.

I think we have all heard of leprosy. For most of us though, I think it wasn't until Covid that any of us really appreciated what this "leprosy" business was all about. For example Covid damages ones taste and smell, vital organs and such. Leprosy damages ones central nervous system and the largest organ of the body, the skin. Covid demanded social isolation, quarantine. Leprosy too forced one out of the community into quarantine. Covid forced one to cover up, wear a mask. Leprosy forced one to cover themselves too. If one got Covid he or she had to tell close contacts he or she contacted it. Leprosy forced one to go around shouting to anyone in close contact – unclean! Unclean! When one finally recovered from Covid, one had to prove it by going symptomless for a certain time. With leprosy one cured had to have this verified by the priests – that is why Jesus tells the man in today's gospel to go and show himself to the priest. Both Covid and leprosy are spread through airborne water droplets. Only during Covid did we realise how mentally harmful isolation can be with all its mental health repercussions that we had to go through. As social beings it is very unnatural to live in isolation.

In today's gospel, we continue to hear Mark report the miraculous healings that Jesus performed in Galilee. The Gospel begins with Jesus healing a man with leprosy. Leprosy is a disfiguring, infectious skin disease that has been surrounded by many social and religious taboos throughout history. In Jesus's time, religious and social taboos dictated the behaviour of those with leprosy and other skin diseases. The Law of Moses provided for the examination of skin diseases by the priests and if leprosy was identified, the person was declared unclean. People with leprosy lived in isolation from the community. They were instructed to rip their clothes and to announce their presence with loud cries when moving in the community. If the sores of leprosy healed, the Law of Moses

provided a purification rite that permitted the person to return to the community.

It is lonely living by yourself, especially when you think the time alone is because no one wants to go near you. When the leper comes before Jesus and says, "if you wish, you can make me clean," it almost sounds like a pleas: "if you wish, you can love me, if you wish, invite me in". What does it mean to bring our messes to God? Maybe our disfigurement is not external. Maybe it is more internal and we need to live with it in concealment. We too need healing and acceptance. We too fear rejection and needs compassion and understanding.

In today's gospel, the man with leprosy took the initiative, approaching Jesus and asked for healing. In doing so, the leper violated the religious customs of the day by approaching a person who was clean. His request to Jesus can be interpreted as a courageous and daring act. The confidence of the leper in Jesus's ability to heal him is evident in the words of his request. But his words can also be read a challenge to Jesus, asking just how far Jesus was willing to extend himself in order to heal someone like him. While healing the man, Jesus touched him, which also violates established social norms. This is an important sign of the depth of Jesus's compassion for the man and an important statement about Jesus's interpretation of the Law of Moses.

Mark tells us that after the healing, it became difficult for Jesus to travel freely. So by the end of the story, Jesus and the former leper have basically traded palaces. The former leper is telling everyone he meets that Jesus has healed him, whilst Jesus has become isolated and alone. It is as though the leper and Jesus have had a role reversal

We are desired in love and given opportunities in the messiness of our humanity to love. We might find the process of being made clean akin to healing, but in order to do that we have to be vulnerable.

During our lonely nights, we are invited to seek comfort in the vulnerability of the leper and the echoes of Jesus's response to him. Our God's love is a liberating love. Regardless of the ailments we might experience. God is there to say "I do will it, I love you. I want you to be clean. Our messes never go away. We all carry anxiety, trauma, discomfort, pain and sorrow in every action of our lives. Since thinking through the readings today, I have found new comfort in the commonly printed phrase, bless this mess.

As we approach the season of Lent, how will you ask God to bless your mess? How will you allow yourself to feel the love of Jesus as he prepared to suffer? How will you allow the spirit of God to move you to love others in the midst of their messes? How will you bring yourself before God to be made clean?

A gentle reminder that we have a Healing Mass on Monday the 12th February at 7.00pm and Ash Wednesday is this coming Wednesday and we have a Mass at 10.00am and another one at 7.00pm with the distribution of ashes.

Thank you once again for taking the time to read my reflection. God bless you all.



All the Masses being said at St James' will be live streamed
<https://www.churchservices.tv/pettswood>
For the protection of all attend St James we request that you do not video live Masses using your phone during services.
 You can also take part in Adoration and Benediction by live stream.
 All events for live streaming are listed on the streaming site.

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Confessions will be heard in the church on Saturdays, 5.00-5.45pm,
 or by appointment.

Sixth Sunday Saturday 10th February Sunday 11th February	06:00pm Thanksgiving for the intention of Sreekumar (Soares & Lobo family) 09:15am Ed Silmon -Monerri (M Medina) 11:00am Geraldine Mulroy RIP (L O'Sullivan) Hannah Cott & Family (L O'Sullivan) Sarah & Jemma Hyde - 18th Birthday & Exams (M Riches)
Feria Monday 12th February	10:00am Josephine & Seamus McMorrow 07:00pm Healing Mass - For the well-being of the Flower family
Feria Tuesday 13th February	10:00am Jean Rawling RIP (Foundation Mass)
Ash Wednesday Wednesday 14th February	10:00am Rachel Naughton (Simon & Gray Families) 07:00pm Edward Blake (J Blake)
Feria Thursday 15th February	10:00am Rev Fr Brian Maxwell
Feria Friday 16th February	No Mass from St James' Please note that St Edmund of Canterbury, Beckenham will be live streaming their Mass at 10:00am. Click here for direct link to St Edmund's: https://www.churchservices.tv/beckenham
First Sunday of Lent Saturday 17th February Sunday 18th February	06.00pm Deceased members of Miranda Family (S&N Miranda) 09:15am Pamela Gann (P&T Troy) 11:00am Janet Winn RIP (Simon & Gray Family)

Second Collections

This weeks second collection is for the Maintenance/Building Fund.
 Next weeks second collection will be for the Clergy Support Fund.



The current needs for this week are for:

- Tinned Vegetables
- Tinned cold meat
- Cooking Sauces
- Squash & Fruit Juice
- Shampoo and Conditioners
- Washing up Liquid
- Desserts, sponge puddings,jelly

For more information go to: <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>