

## Father Dave's Weekly Homily

02/12/12 ..... 6 B

-- Certain religious groups have used a practice called shunning. When one of their members violates an important law or practice they are isolated, not allowed to participate in religious or social activities of the group. This is used by groups such as the Amish.

-- It's a greater punishment in situations where the group is the lifeblood of the people involved. The closer the group, the greater this punishment happens to be.

-- Though they grew to be rather large—many thousands in number—the people of Israel were a close-knit group. Being a part of the group was everything for them.

-- People with skin diseases lumped under the title Leprosy were isolated. Most probably did not have Hansen's disease, which is true leprosy, but they suffered this fate nevertheless. This was in part because these conditions were thought to be contagious.

-- But another big factor was their belief that such afflictions came on a person because of sin, his own or perhaps his parents (eg., Man born blind). A person was unclean, in body and soul, because of this disease.

-- In our gospel a man with this disease approaches Jesus. This is itself a violation of law, for he was supposed to remain at a distance from uninfected people. But that didn't bother Jesus.

-- Jesus simply saw how much faith the man put in him. So he healed him, not just by saying words but by touching him.

-- Now, if we read on in the Book of Leviticus (1<sup>st</sup> reading) we'd know that this made Jesus "unclean" for a period of time. He would now have to remain apart from the crowd and outside the cities and towns.

-- So, in a real sense, Jesus "took on" this man's illness. He allowed himself to be involved to the point that he took on some of that person's condition. (St. Paul: to the weak I became weak...)

-- As a result, Jesus remained outside the towns. Part of that was due to his worry that his healing ministry might be misunderstood, but it was also due to the condition he'd taken on by touching that man.

-- Which brings up the question: Are we willing to be touched by the hurt of others around us? Are we willing to reach out to those who are isolated in our society, or are thought unworthy of our attention?

-- When Jesus did that, healing took place. We can be instruments of Jesus' healing, if we are only willing to reach out to the neglected and rejected people around us.

-- There may be a price. We may find ourselves outside the mainstream. But, remember, even when Jesus remained outside of town, people came to him. They saw his power.

-- We can be instruments of Jesus' power as well.