

Homily
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THE LEPER AND HIS COMMUNITY

The leper in today's Gospel asks Jesus for more than healing. He kneels down, begs Jesus and says, "You can make me clean."

Making the leper clean requires a lot more than healing him. As one who is unclean, the leper is banished from the Jewish community of believers. He is not allowed inside the temple.

The cry of the leper, then, is not just to be cured of his illness. Even more than that, he wants to be restored to his faith community, to be back with his fellow believers, to be allowed to return to the temple to worship God. That is his greatest wish.

This account in the Bible raises this question: How badly do we want to be full members of the Body of Christ? Not part-time members, but full-time members.

Today's Gospel reminds me of a married couple I know. Several years ago, they went to Rome, and they spent virtually all of their time seeing and learning about the early history of the Catholic Church.

Their time in Rome led them to face this question: "When it comes to our Catholic faith, are we all in? In other words, are we willing to follow all of the teachings and moral principles of the Catholic Church?" They knew that the answer to this question was "No," that they were picking and choosing which teachings of the Church they would follow. They decided that from that moment on, when it came to their Catholic faith, they would be all in.

I've never been to Rome, but, like most of us, I fought the same battle as my friends. Who's in control, me or the Church? When I finally gave in, I have to admit I was surprised at how the Church had so much more wisdom than I had.

So the question for each of us this morning is, "Are we all in?" Are we striving to be completely faithful to all that the Catholic Church expects of us?

If the answer is no, then we have to do what the leper did. We have to go see Jesus in the confessional. We have to kneel down and say to him, "If you wish, you can make me clean. I have not been **all in** when it comes to my faith. Forgive me, and give me the grace to be fully restored to the Body of Christ. Help me to be completely obedient to what you ask of me through your Church."