

Dear Padre,

At Mass on holy days of obligation, there's a fair crowd. But on Ash Wednesday, not a holy day, the place is packed. Your explanation?

Indeed, pastoral experience corroborates your observation. Holy days of obligation draw well, but it's "standing room only" on Ash Wednesday. Although not a day of obligation, perhaps it's considered a "holy" day by most Catholics.

There's something elemental about the smudge of ashes on the forehead. People wear it without embarrassment or shame. No matter our walk of life or social status, we want that sooty cross. It's a badge of identification, graphically reminding Catholics that it's "spiritual gut-check" time. It jogs us from our routines, spurring us to the important reality of being who we are supposed to be—fully and totally Christian. It's as if we are saying, "I'm Catholic and proud of it. I may not be the best or greatest. I have faults and sins, but I'm not a bad person. I know deep down that being Christian is the way to live, and I'm going to try again."

Ash Wednesday signals the beginning of Lent, the Church's special time of confession and renewal in preparation for Easter. It is what Christians are all about—a people who have died with Christ in the waters of baptism in order to rise with him to a new life. We renew our baptismal commitment to be his people. As we celebrate Christ's passage through death to life, we renew our own death to old sinful ways to rise and live with recaptured vigor.

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THOMAS/SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM Pope Francis

Contrary to the dispositions of the Law of Moses, which prohibited a leper from drawing near, Jesus extends his hand and even touches him....Jesus teaches us not to be afraid to touch the poor and the excluded, because he is in them. Touching the poor can cleanse us from hypocrisy.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, JUNE 22, 2016



Calendar

Monday
FEBRUARY 15
Weekday
Gn 4:1–15, 25
Mk 8:11–13

Tuesday
FEBRUARY 16
Weekday
Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10
Mk 8:14–21

Wednesday
FEBRUARY 17
Ash Wednesday
Jl 2:12–18
2 Cor 5:20—6:2
Mt 6:1–6, 16–18

Thursday
FEBRUARY 18
Thursday after
Ash Wednesday
Dt 30:15–20
Lk 9:22–25

Friday
FEBRUARY 19
Friday after
Ash Wednesday
Is 58:1–9a
Mt 9:14–15

Saturday
FEBRUARY 20
Saturday after
Ash Wednesday
Is 58:9b–14
Lk 5:27–32

Sunday
FEBRUARY 21
First Sunday of Lent
Gn 9:8–15
1 Pt 3:18–22
Mk 1:12–15

Our Parish COMMUNITY

February 14, 2021
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
Lv 13:1–2, 44–46
1 Cor 10:31–11:1
Mk 1:40–45

Jesus Embraces the Culturally Marginalized

Today's readings are about forced quarantine. On one level they are about diseases that might be contagious. On another level they are about ritual impurity that was contagious. The Israelites believed that to stand before God in worship, one's body had to be physically intact—no fractures or missing body parts, no open wounds, no oozing body fluids. Skin lesions like those associated with leprosy made one ritually unclean or impure. Furthermore, to touch one with such a disease was to become unclean oneself. The ritual impurity was considered contagious, not necessarily the disease. Unclean people were socially and religiously ostracized.

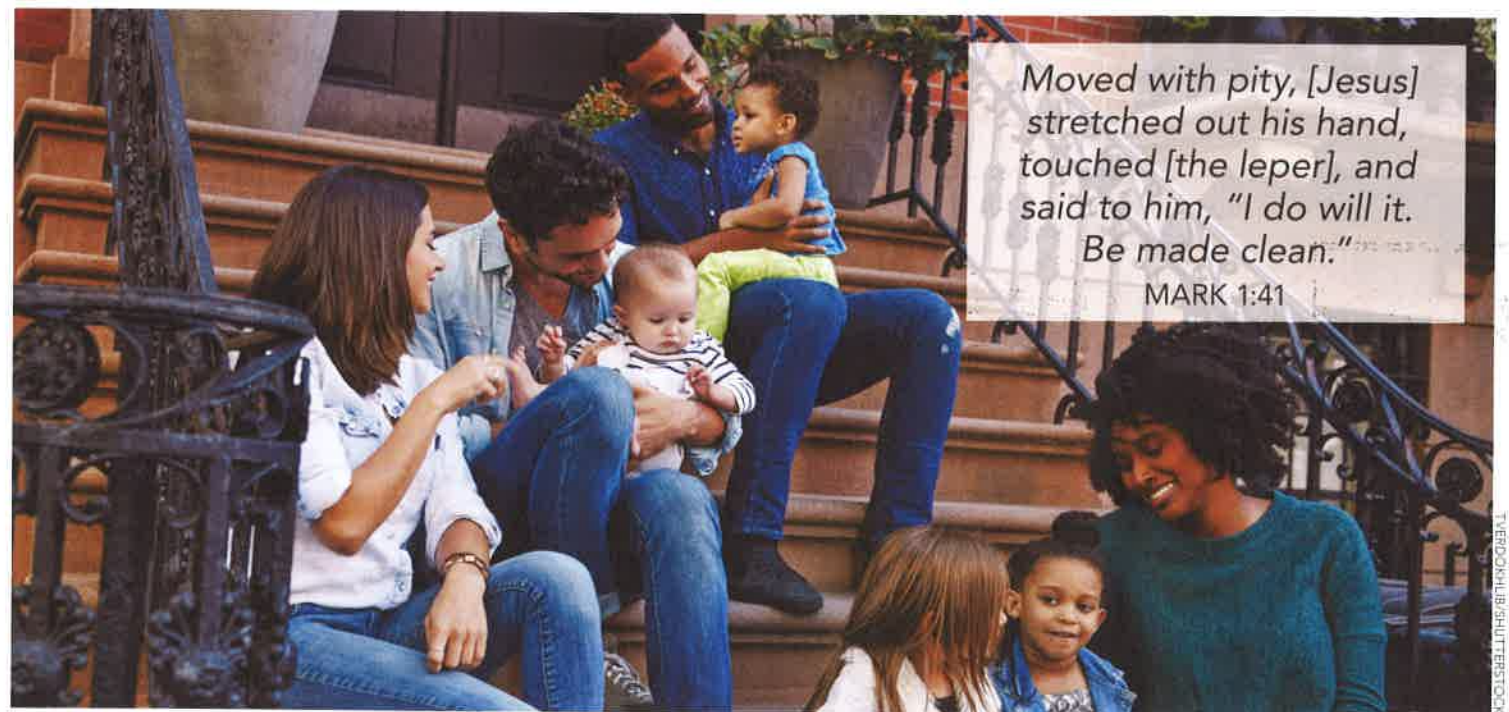
In the Gospel story, Jesus completely neutralized this practice. Touching the leprous and thus unclean man, Jesus not only didn't become unclean himself, but he actually made the man clean again. The issue here is not merely one of healing. It is a matter of reincorporating the marginalized man into society. Unfortunately, out of fear or a sense of superiority,

some people ostracize or marginalize entire groups of people. This bias might be based on gender, race, culture, sexual preference—almost anything. In this way the benefits of society are denied to those who are marginalized. One characteristic of Jesus, obvious throughout the Gospel stories, is his all-inclusiveness. Jesus rejected no one. He was open to those who society ostracized. He interacted graciously with people with diseases, non-Jews, recognized public sinners, and those working with the Roman occupiers—all people considered ritually unclean. As his disciples, can we do less?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- ★ Which groups of people does society tend to ostracize or marginalize?
- ★ What might be done to reverse this bias?



Moved with pity, [Jesus] stretched out his hand, touched [the leper], and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."
MARK 1:41



St. Mary's Church
Dalton, NE 69131



All Souls' Church
Bridgeport, NE 69336



Sacred Heart Church
Bayard, NE 69334

Pastor: Rev. Dr. C.P. Varghese
Address: 701 P Street, Bridgeport, NE 69336

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Dear Sisters, Brothers and Children in Jesus Christ,

The word *Vayikra* (the Hebrew name of the Book of Leviticus) means that God called Moses and His chosen people to holiness and purity. That is why today's **first reading** teaches the theme of freedom from bodily and ritual impurity as a sign of internal holiness. This freedom is symbolized by the precautions against contracting leprosy given in the first reading and by the healing of the leper described in the Gospel. The first reading shows the ancient Jewish attitude toward leprosy and gives the rules for the segregation of lepers. This provides a background for Jesus' healing of a leper. In today's **Responsorial Psalm** (Ps 32), the psalmist says: *"I confessed my faults to the LORD, and You took away my guilt."* He teaches us that we become holy by confessing our sins and being reconciled with God every day. The psalm serves as a mini treatise on reconciliation, covering the meaning of the spiritual leprosy of sin and showing how we are forgiven by a Sacramental encounter with God: *"I turn to You, Lord, in times of trouble, and You fill me with the joy of salvation."* In today's **second reading**, St. Paul exhorts us to become holy by doing *"everything for the glory of God"* and by showing sensitivity toward others who are different from us, rather than passing judgment on them. **Today's Gospel** describes how Jesus heals a leper, liberating him both from the disease of leprosy and from the unjust, inhuman social, ritual, and religious isolation and ostracism to which lepers were subjected.

We need to trust in the mercy of a forgiving God who assures us that our sins are forgiven and that we are clean. We are forgiven and made spiritually clean from the spiritual leprosy of sins when we repent of our sins, because God is a God of love Who waits patiently for us. The only condition required of us is that we ask for forgiveness with a repentant heart. We are sure to hear His words of absolution, *"Very well — your sins are forgiven, and you are clean,"* echoed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We need to tear down the walls that separate us from others and build bridges of loving relationship. Jesus calls every one of us to demolish the walls that separate us from each other and to welcome the outcasts and the untouchables of society. These include gays, the imprisoned, AIDS victims, alcoholics, drug addicts and marginalized groups — the divorced, the unmarried-single mothers, migrant workers, and the mentally ill. God's loving hand must reach out to them through us. Jesus wants us to touch their lives. Let us re-examine the barriers we have created and approach God with a heart that is ready to welcome the outcasts in our society. (From Rev. Fr. Tony Kadavil's homilies).

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Fr. C. P. Varghese
Pastor

SCHEDULE FOR THIS WEEK

Date	Day	Time	Place	Intention
02/15	Monday	No Mass Today		
02/16	Tuesday	6.00 PM	Bayard	Blessing of Ashes & Holy Eucharist
02/17	Wednesday	8.00 AM	Dalton	Blessing of Ashes & Holy Eucharist
02/17	Wednesday	6.00 PM	Bridgeport	Blessing of Ashes & Holy Eucharist
02/18	Thursday	5.30 PM	Dalton	Stations of the cross & Holy Eucharist
02/19	Friday	11.30 AM	Bayard	Stations of the cross & Holy Eucharist
02/20	Saturday	5.30 PM	Dalton	Intention - Anna Faye Van Anne
02/21	Sunday	800 AM	Bayard	For an end to all abortions
02/21	Sunday	10.30 AM	Bridgeport	Oneva Lummel

ALL SOULS
617 P STREET
BRIDGEPORT NE 69336

MASS TIME
Tuesday — 6:00 PM
Sunday — 10.30 AM

Online Evening Prayer:
February 16, Tuesday
at 8.00 PM

OUR GIFTS TO GOD & CHURCH

ADULTS	\$390.00
CHILDREN	
PLATE	\$512.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 902.00
EASTERN EUROPE	\$10.00
UTILITIES	\$50.00
TOTAL	\$ 962.00
BUILDING FUND	\$308.00
HEAT/AC	\$480.00
DONATIONS	\$3,615.00
APPEAL GOAL	\$6,046.00
BALANCE	(\$2,431.00)

- Prayer line requests may be made to Carolyn-262-0453 or Teresa-262-0439.
- The rosary is prayed ½ hr before Mass, please come and pray.



SACRED HEART
1003 AVE B
BAYARD NE 69334

MASS TIME
Friday — 12:00 PM
Sunday — 8:00 AM

Online Evening Prayer:
February 16, Tuesday
at 8.00 PM

OUR GIFTS TO GOD & CHURCH

ADULTS	\$395.00
CHILDREN	
PLATE	\$575.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 970.00
MASS STIPEND	
RESALE REL. ARTICLES	\$39.00
TOTAL	\$1,009.00
BUILDING FUND	
DONATIONS	\$2,915.00
APPEAL GOAL	\$4,907.00
BALANCE	(\$1,992.00)

- Prayer line requests may be made to Paula-586-2992.
- The rosary is prayed ½ hr before Mass, please come and pray.



SAINT MARY'S
718 FRANCIS ST
DALTON NE 69131

MASS TIME
Thursday — 6:00 PM
Saturday — 5:30 PM

Online Evening Prayer:
February 16, Tuesday
at 8.00 PM

OUR GIFTS TO GOD & CHURCH

ADULTS	\$1045.00
CHILDREN	
PLATE	
SUBTOTAL	\$1,045.00
MASS STIPEND	\$20.00
TOTAL	\$1,065.00
BUILDING FUND	
DONATIONS	\$4,111.00
APPEAL GOAL	\$6,136.00
BALANCE	(\$2,025.00)

- Prayer line requests may be made to DeAnn-249-1735.
- The rosary is prayed ½ hr before Mass, please come and pray.

