

**Homily for February 16, 2003
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time B**

By Father Charles Bowes

**Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46
1 Corinthians 10:31, 11:1
Mark 1:40-45**

Once God touches us, it's impossible to keep quiet about it.

There's an interesting reversal of roles taking place in our gospel Mark chapter 1.

The leper who starts off as an outcast is restored to the community, while Jesus, who starts off seen as a decent Jew, becomes the one cast out because he touches the unclean one – the leper. Furthermore, in touching the leper, Jesus not only disobeys the law but also scandalizes the faith-filled folks around him – it was for the sake of safety and to cut down the risk of contagion that people were careful about whom they touched as evidenced by their skin texture or whatever. The leper, on the other hand, disobeys Jesus when asked to be silent and continues to spread the word of what Jesus did.

In the case of Jesus, and in the case of the leper, the experience of God coming near just simply requires compassion and proclamation. Jesus was so attuned to the Father that he had to touch that leper, going contrary to the laws of the time. The leper in turn, experiencing healing, could not obey Jesus' restriction on proclamation but just had to go around telling

everybody what happened to him. Hence, the reversal – Jesus is cast out, disrespected, but sought after by those who are in similar straights of being cast out. The leper is once again restored to the community of the healthy and the faithful.

We're privileged this day to hear from yet another person who has somehow experienced God and needs to talk about it.

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