

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) 02/15/2015

A survey was once conducted that asked people which candidate they would select for a world leader. The first candidate – the survey states – is associated with crooked politics and consults astrologists. He has had two mistresses. He is a chain smoker and drinks eight to ten martinis a day.

The second candidate was kicked out of office twice and sleeps until noon. He used drugs in college and drinks a quart of whiskey every day.

The third candidate is a decorated war hero. He is a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, and drinks an occasional beer. He has never cheated on his wife.

Who would you select?

If you chose the first candidate, your selection would have been *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (FDR). If your choice was candidate number two, you would have chosen *Winston Churchill*. If you voted for the third candidate, you would have selected *Adolf Hitler*.

Relying primarily upon externals can often mislead us, and blind us to what is really important. This is the message that we hear in today's gospel story from **Mark**.

Fear can cause us to do things that we would ordinarily not do. Much like the **Ebola Virus** today, there was no cure – in ancient times – for **leprosy**; and similar to **Ebola**, **leprosy** is very **contagious**. The **recognition** that the disease is **dangerous** and that it can **decimate** a population, cause **very stringent** laws to be enacted and that later become – as we hear in our first reading from **Leviticus** – an **edict** from **God**.

Then, the **external** skin disorder takes on **added significance**. Those with **leprosy** are **labeled *unclean***. That is, it is believed that the **external** disease is a ***clear* indication** that **internally** the person is **morally *impure***. This leads to the **accepted practice** of **shaming, ostracizing, and isolating** anyone with the disease.

Jesus rejects this way of thinking. He doesn't **shame** anyone. He, instead, **practices recognizing** in each person the **image of God**. He knows that ***when we fail to recognize or when we deny the image of God in another, we fail to recognize or we deny the image of God in ourselves.***

We do this every time we **judge** another, each time we **belittle** another, every time we **bully** another, each time we **separate** ourselves from another. We - by **denying** the other of the **image of God** - **deny** ourselves too.

Jesus, we are told by the gospel writers, **comes to heal**. He comes to help us know that the **Divine dwells with us**. This is something that others come to know too as we **practice** recognizing the **Divine in them**. We begin by **practicing** letting people know that **they are not alone**.