

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 16th 2014**

Thousands killed in battle; the arc of God captured, a man afflicted with leprosy – the implicit theme that speaks to me in today's readings is one of suffering. The following is a list of paradoxes about suffering written by Canon Carl Siegel II:

Suffering is not God's desire for us, nor a gift from God. The paradox is that suffering occurs in the process of this thing we call life.

Suffering is not given in order to teach us something. The paradox is that we can learn from suffering, and grow.

Suffering is not given to punish us. The paradox is that suffering sometimes comes as the result of poor choices we make.

Suffering is not given to teach others something. The paradox is that through suffering we can learn about faith, character, endurance, hope as well as weakness, struggle, humility.

Suffering does not occur because one's faith is weak. The paradox is that our faith may be strengthened by the journey through suffering.

God does not depend on human suffering to achieve divine purposes. The paradox is that, sometimes, God's purposes are fulfilled through suffering.

Suffering is not always to be avoided at all costs. The paradox is that people sometimes choose suffering.

Suffering can sometimes destroy us. The paradox is that it can add meaning to our lives.

In the midst of suffering, how wonderful it is to experience the healing touch of Jesus! Have you

experienced Jesus' healing touch? Jesus touches all of us, even when we are not aware of it. I haven't always been aware of Jesus' healing touch and am thankful for changes in my life that have deepened my ability for greater awareness. An instrumental part in my growth can be attributed to the realization of the importance of prayer.

The man in today's Gospel reading afflicted with leprosy realized the importance of prayer. His model of prayer is powerful. His body language is moving as he humbly approached Jesus on his knees. I am reminded of several occasions when I was moved to tears after witnessing the humbleness of people on their knees during Mass. I am also reminded of the time when I was a little girl and would say my nighttime prayers kneeling beside my bed. He also models prayer by humbly asking "if you wish, you could make me clean." Jesus touches the man and the man is made clean. As we continue to experience life, including the battles, diseases and suffering, my prayer is for continued growth in modeling the prayer of the leper and experiencing the healing touch of Jesus!

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