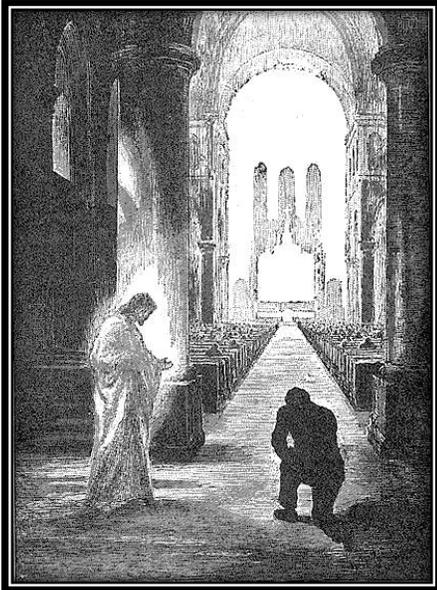




THE RETURNING LEPER

(Where are the other nine?)



As the eleventh year of my Pastorate at Our Holy Redeemer in Freeport draws me more deeply into an awareness and remembrance of everything God has given me since *coming home* on 25 June 2008, I cannot help but “give thanks to the Lord for He is good”. Every Sunday, roughly two thousand of that “everything” *comes home* for Holy Mass and offers the time, talent, and treasure – inside of our “absolutely beautiful church” – that helps anyone and everyone who *comes home*, learn why: “*coming home* what it’s all about”.

In the Gospel for XXVIII Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), Jesus heals ten lepers, and as one of those healed returns and prostrates himself at the feet of Jesus, Jesus asks: “All were cleansed were they not? Where are the other nine?” Dwelling amongst the two thousand who *come home* and gather in His Name, Jesus asks the question this way: “All were cleansed were they not? Where are the others? Where is your husband/your daughter/your mother/your brother/your next door neighbour?”

All too often, people are ready to interpret Jesus’s questions to the returning Leper as a condemnation of the nine lepers who did not return to Him. We should not however, be so quick to arrive at such an interpretation. Notice that the returning Leper “realized” he had been cured. Perhaps the other nine lepers who were healed and continued on their way to do as Jesus commanded them (an honourable thing in of itself: to do as Jesus commands), did not realize they were healed, and so they did not “see” any reason to make a return to the Lord.

If we interpret Jesus’ questions to the returning Leper as a condemnation of the other nine lepers, it is more than likely that we will interpret His questions to us who return to Him every Sunday at Holy Mass as a condemnation of our husband/our daughter/our mother/our brother/our next door neighbour who have chosen not to make that return. Perhaps though, their absence is – as it was for “the other nine” – a sign that our husband/our daughter/our mother/our brother/our next door neighbour do not yet realize that they have been healed.

All of Freeport’s Baptized Catholics have been healed by the unmerited Gift of Divine Mercy, yet not all of them realize it. And so, rather than apply the *interpretation of condemnation* to our neighbour who only returns for Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Easter, let us have pity on them (our husbands/our daughters/our mothers/our brothers/our next door neighbours) and consider how we can open their eyes. Then they will see, as I have seen for nearly twelve years: why “*coming home* is what it’s all about!”

✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ **ONE SMALL STEP FOR A PARISHIONER, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR A PARISH** ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠

Page - left of this Message, you will see a photograph of a space that is used by hundreds of people a week. It is a photograph of the center-Pine Street vestibule and gymnasium of Our Holy Redeemer School-building. If you recognize the gymnasium but not the vestibule, that is because the floor covering is brand new. After years of wear and tear, the pre-existing floor covering needed to be removed and replaced, and now, because of parishioners (perhaps you) who have **increased their weekly financial offering** to our Parish (see the following Page), that removal and replacement has taken place. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!