



## INDIGNANT COMPASSION

**W**hen modern Christians read about leprosy in the Bible, we immediately think of Hansen's disease. In the Scriptures, however, the term 'leprosy' was used for a wide variety of skin diseases, as well as lesions or infections that might occur on the skin, fabrics, and even on the walls of houses. In biblical times people who suffered from leprosy had three problems. Firstly, there were the undesirable physical effects of the disease. Secondly, there were social effects in so far as the victims had to keep their distance from other people. Thirdly, there was a spiritual

stigma associated with leprosy; people saw it as a curse from God as a punishment for serious sin.

When Jesus met with the man suffering from leprosy, he reacted with what could be referred to as indignant compassion. Jesus didn't judge by appearances. He had a deep sense of empathy for the poor man who was suffering so much. He was vividly aware of the innermost value of the leper, as a child of God. At the same time, he felt angry because the leprosy was stunting the leper's potential. When the man asked Jesus if he wanted to help him,

Jesus responded: 'Of course I want to. Be clean.' Joseph Schmid's translation of the Gospel reads, 'Then Jesus in his anger stretched out his hand to him, touched him, and said to him: "I will — be clean."' In other words, because Jesus was affirming the man's dignity he was angrily resisting the disease that was afflicting him. Knowing that his antagonism to the leprosy was a share in the mind and heart and will of God his Father, Jesus uttered a compassionate word of command and the man was healed.

People in the healing ministry know, from experience, that often their prayers for conditions — whether they are depression, anxiety, cancer or chronic pain — are energised by the indignant compassion that sometimes motivated the healing ministry of Jesus. Like the Lord who angrily cursed a fig tree that bore no fruit, they command the illnesses to wither away. As Jesus said, 'Have faith in God. I assure you that whoever tells this hill to get up and throw itself in the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him' (Mk 11:22-23). ■

— Pat Collins

day our daily bread, / and forgive us our trespasses, / as we forgive those who trespass against us; / and lead us not into temptation, / but deliver us from evil.

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, ...

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, ...

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And with your spirit.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Amen.

Behold the Lamb of God, ...

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

**Communion Antiphon** (Cf. Ps 77:29-30)

They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved.

**Prayer after Communion**

Having fed upon these heavenly delights, we pray, O Lord, that we may always long for that food by which we truly live. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Reflection

What is your attitude toward people who are sick? Try to reflect the interior feeling of Jesus when he was moved to pity.

### Lesson

Stories of healing show that God is mighty and also very loving.

### Prayer

Lord, teach us the value of suffering and enable us to reach out with compassion. Amen.