

**Homily — The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2018  
by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS**

**I know of a parish in a city not far from here  
Where, years ago, the pastor instructed the people, instead of saying  
"O Lord I am not worthy" at communion time,  
he had them say "O Lord, I AM worthy to have you come to me."**

**The parish was in one of the most run-down parts of the city.  
Many of the people who were part of that parish  
were what are called "street people."  
They were among the "no-counts" of society.  
This pastor had a great love and compassion for these people  
who tended to be the outcasts of society.  
His desire was to remind them about their own dignity and worth.**

**Funny thing is, our use of those words, "Lord, I am not worthy ..."  
at Communion time at every Eucharist comes right out the Gospels.**

**And I think there is purpose in our use of those words,  
as challenging and off-putting as they may sound.**

**Which brings us to the reference of lepers in today's readings.  
Leprosy at the time of the Gospels  
could refer to just about any kind of bodily disfigurement.  
And people regularly equated such bodily defects, flaws, skin diseases  
with God's punishment for sin.**

**Lepers, in a very real way became society's scapegoats.  
They represented what people feared was true about themselves.**

**We human beings are quite adept at hiding our weaknesses,  
the unsightly, even sinful, aspects of our lives.**

**In biblical times people feared lepers because they reminded them  
of their own enslavement, their deformities, their warts  
and their own eventual decay.  
Shunning lepers was, among other things, an unconscious way  
that people protected themselves from facing their own frailty  
and the inevitable approach of death.  
Perhaps the worst of it is that we can hide our own frailty from ourselves.  
believing in the image we project  
rather than the truth—and the beauty—of who we are.**

**Jesus steps into the situation and touches the leper;  
risks becoming marginalized himself for the sake of this leper.**

**Every time we come to Communion we ask Jesus to touch us,**

to make us more whole.

He cannot do that unless we are willing to acknowledge our  
our frailty, our profound neediness.

In a very real way he says to us, "What do you want me to do for you?"

May our sincere response be "Of course, I want you to heal me."

The priest in that parish I spoke of at the beginnings had his heart  
in the right place.

I think he missed that communal recognition and acknowledgment  
of our neediness, our woundedness  
that brings us before the mercy-seat of the God  
who longs to say to us "Of course, I want to heal you."

Chuck Van Vleet becomes an IHM Associate today.

Not so much about helping out,  
but becoming part of something greater than himself.

Like the leper in the Gospel story, Chuck becomes an apostle,  
like the leper sent to the priest.

Sent in the name of Jesus to announce Good News.