

Reflection on St. Mark's Gospel 1: 40-45

- “ I Do”
- Just three letters, two little words. But when spoken together form one big promise.
- When we say these two words, we are speaking volumes. When someone needs us and asks if we will assist; if someone asks us to commit to something or someone and we say “I Do” we are making a promise. A promise to care, to help, to get involved, to give of ourselves, to extend the time, effort and energy. We are saying this matters to me; you matter to me
- Think of some times these words are used. At weddings the bride and groom are asked if they are willing to love and care for each for a lifetime. When public officials are sworn into office they are asked if they will carry out the duties of the office. At the inauguration the President is asked if he will defend the Constitution. At our baptisms we were asked (or our parents were asked for us) if we believe in and promise to follow the teachings of the Church – we are asked these questions again each Easter when we renew our Baptism promises. All of these questions seek a promise, a commitment – an “I Do”.
- In today’s Gospel reading we see the depth of God’s love and care for His people – when hear Jesus say “I do”.
- In the Gospel passage we find a person suffering from leprosy, a very contagious and in those times incurable disease. Not only did lepers suffer from the physical effects of the disease, the suffered the social and emotional consequences. They were treated as outcasts. They were declared “unclean” and were identified as

such to the whole community. They were isolated; deprived of touch, forbidden to interact with others.

- In his desperation we hear this man cry out to Jesus ““If you wish, you can make me clean.”
- A heartfelt cry out to God for help; certain that Jesus had the power to do something – if He wanted to.
- If we listen close we hear other questions hidden in that plea: Do you love me? Do you care? Am I important enough to you?
- And Jesus answers all those questions in one simple sentence: “I do will it. Be made clean.”
- An affirmation of God’s love for that man and for each of us.
- In that one sentence, in those two words, Jesus tells that man (and each of us) God loves us, cares about us, is willing to be involved in our lives. We are important; we matter to God. God promises to be there for us; and God keeps His promise (as we see the leprosy instantly leave the man).
- And isn’t the lepers encounter with Jesus similar to our own experiences. So many times we go to God with our needs. We ask for help for ourselves and for others. And each time God tells us “I do want to”.
- And that “I do” can take various forms.
- Sometimes we get exactly what we pray for.
- Sometimes we receive something far greater, something we didn’t think of or could ever imagine possible.
- And sometimes we are given the grace of acceptance, another way of looking at and thinking about the problem we face.
- In our Gospel today we see the man’s great joy. He is healed; he can be with people again, be part of the community. Imagine the joy he felt!

- But we don't have to think too long to imagine the joy he felt. Think of the joy we will feel when we can safely take our masks off, shake hands again; hug each other again; gather in community again. That day is coming. Once it took 12 years to develop and distribute vaccines; today we see this happening in less than 12 months. We need to see God's response to our cry for help. Again He tells us: "I do want to".
- Our Gospel reading closes with Jesus directing the cleansed man not to publicize the matter (the miracle). Jesus had work to do and he needed to move about freely to bring healing and the love of God to many others in need.
- But let's not judge the healed man too harshly for not following our Lord's directive. He was so filled with the joy and love of God he couldn't contain the good news – he had to share it.
- And therein lies the final lesson for us in today's Gospel. Today, Jesus wants us to be so filled with the joy and love of God we can't contain it but are compelled to share it!!
- To be follower of Jesus, to imitate Jesus; we must be the vehicle through which God continues to say "I do" to those that reach out to Him. To those that need to know they matter. To those seeking help, mercy and the love of God.