

Clean, in the sense of clean from **sin**, is the word for these readings. The idea is to seek **cleanliness** from the **leprosy** of **sin**.

The **Transfiguration** suits this contemplation, as Jesus presents himself **clean** from the **leprosy** of **sin**.

Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46

No comment.

Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11

verse 7 I turn to you, Lord, in **time of trouble**, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.

Time of trouble means **sin**. This is one of the seven penitential psalms monastic nuns often say every Friday in reparation for **sin**.¹ The 32nd Psalmist is filled with joy at being reunited with the People of God. In the penitential psalms, the Faithful recognize that only God can raise them from the depths of **sin**.² For true repentance, one must wait for God to call one back.

Other traditions also use the 32nd Psalm. Byzantine rites use the 32nd Psalm as a rite of personal purification before Baptism. Some Jews recite the 32nd Psalm for night prayers on Mondays and Wednesdays, "begging God to break the silence and dangers, the howling voices and nightmares of darkness."³

My commentary for Readings 115A for August 11, 2002, the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, used the following paragraph:

First it is necessary to recognize the way in which the penitential psalms, especially Psalms 32, 28, 51, and **130** blend individual piety with the justice concerns of prophecy and with the public ritual of the Temple. This interaction assures a strong, healthy spirituality, so that personal

¹ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., [The Spirituality of the Psalms](#) (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 156

² Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., [The Spirituality of the Psalms](#) (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 176.

³ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., [The Spirituality of the Psalms](#) (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 156.

Personal Notes
030216 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time 77B
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sincerity keeps a heart and soul within external activity, while the latter prevents individual piety from degeneration into navel gazing and selfish or even morbid subjectivism. Then Psalm 51 can lead listeners and readers through the steps for forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴

Navel gazing is obviated by turning away from politically self-gratifying, self-reinforcing narcissism toward what the scholars are saying as they search for truth unencumbered by politics. That is what the 32nd Psalm is about.

The 32nd Psalm begins with a blessing.

verses 1-2 Blessed is he whose fault is taken away;
whose **sin** is covered.
Blessed the man to whom the LORD imputes not guilt,
in whose spirit there is no guile.

The blessing is for those whose **sins** are forgiven. The psalm goes on to confession by the penitent. The following verse contains the key to the whole psalm.

verse 5 Then I **acknowledged** my **sin** to you,
my guilt I covered not.
I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD,"
and you took away the guilt of my **sin**.

Verse 7 [unused here] is the prayer of the penitent. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., suggests this prayer was said at a night vigil of prayer at the Temple, something like the First Friday Nocturnal Adoration at the parish.

Stuhlmueller observes, "**acknowledgement**, as painful as it may be, in laying bare one's guilt, releases a person of shame and regret, and a sense of relief and happiness flow out."⁵ The result is praise for God almighty as found in the final hymn.

Acknowledgement is an instance of truth determining politics, in this case the politics of dealing with God, even the politics of **sin**.

The liturgy concludes with a final hymn.

verse 11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just;

⁴ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 157.

⁵ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 175.

exult all you upright of heart.

The reason for the joy is reincorporation into the People of God through the forgiveness of **sins**.

The 32nd Psalm is one of the few psalms in which the psalmist receives instruction directly from God.⁶ Evidence for this direct intervention rests in verse 8, unused in the Lectionary. Following StuhlmueLLer's translation,⁷

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you,
Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with a bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.

Why bother with a footnote, such as footnote 6? Five reasons: One, to enable the reader to check the documentation. Two, knowing that what I say can be checked, to encourage me to be accurate. Three, offering comfort to the reader that the sources can be checked. As my professional lectures lengthened, they are now available on the web at www.western-civilization.com, I wondered about the value of the documentation. Students rarely gave any evidence of using the documentation. When I asked the students about omitting the documentation, the students replied that the comfort-value meant a lot to them. Four, enabling the reader to place the source for the facts cited in a broader context. For example, the title of the article cited in footnote 6 is *Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and the Rest of the Old Testament*. In other words, the personal help given the psalmist is part of God's plan in history for even the professional historian. Five, to enable other professionals to check my work.

1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1

No comment.

Luke 7:16

No comment

Mark 1:40-45

⁶ Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., "Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and the Rest of the Old Testament," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 1986), 453.

⁷ Carroll StuhlmueLLer, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 163.

Saint Jerome (347-420) regards the **cleansing** of the leper as told in Matthew (8:1-13) as a sign of the validity of the Sermon on the Mount.⁸ Since the leper was unable to follow the crowd up the mountain, Saint John Chrysostom (354-407) observes the leper had to wait for Jesus to come to him to ask for **cleansing**.⁹ Chrysostom calls the Sermon on the Mount the Sermon of Enlightenment.¹⁰ Such enlightenment has to be enlightenment from sin. The ecclesiastical writer, Remigius of Auxerre (+908), takes leprosy as a mystical signification for **sin**.¹¹ Chrysostom¹² makes a similar comment. Saint Cyril (318-386), Bishop of Jerusalem and Doctor of the Church, calls attention to Merriam, the sister of Moses, struck with leprosy for having murmured against Moses.¹³

verse 40 A leper came to Jesus and **kneeling down** begged him and said,
 “If you wish, you can make me clean.”

⁸ Saint Jerome as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea*, and PL 29, 550 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289, 303.

⁹ Saint John Chrysostom, *Ex. Op. Imp.*, as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima*, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

¹⁰ Saint John Chrysostom, PB 56, 747, *Opus Imperfectum* in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 308.

¹¹ Remigius, as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima*, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

¹² Saint John Chrysostom, PB 56, 747, *Opus Imperfectum* in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

¹³ Saint Cyril, Bishop and Doctor, PB 72, 555-563 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 310.

For **kneeling down** Saint Jerome uses *genu flectens* in such a way that the daily genuflections of the Faithful become a request for **cleansing** from **sin**.

I have not figured out the author of the Parallel Gospels translations in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers. The pertinent section uses the word *adored* in Matthew. Origin (185-253) observes that before the leper makes his prayer, he begins by adoring, by paying homage.¹⁴ The formally correct straight-back genuflections of the Faithful do not carry this sense of adoration for me personally as well as the less formal bent-back genuflections. This sense of adoration before begging for forgiveness of sins, however, is the principal fruit of my personal contemplations.

How can the Faithful pay God for what he does? In much the same way, the desperately poor of Calcutta paid Mother Theresa, with a blessing, all they had. Chrysostom points out that such is the payment of the leper to the healing God.¹⁵

I find that blessing implied in

verse 45a-b The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter.
He spread the report abroad ...

Moving the narrative back a step to just before the healing,

verse 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand,
touched him, and said to him,
“I do will it. Be made clean.”

Touching a leper is significant both for the compassion Jesus demonstrates in the healing and, as Chrysostom observes,¹⁶ in ignoring the law commanding the Faithful not to touch lepers. The leprosy of sin is what is not to be touched. Calling attention to

¹⁴ Origin as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima*, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

¹⁵ Saint John Chrysostom, *Op. Imp.*, as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea*, and PG 56, 747, *Opus Imperfectum* in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289, 305.

¹⁶ Saint John Chrysostom, *Hom. 26 in Matt.* and PG 56, 747 as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima*, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289, 306.

Titus 1:15, Origin points to another reason Jesus touched the leper, to show that all things are clean to the clean.¹⁷

verse 43 Then, warning him **sternly**, he dismissed him at once.

The Greek grammarian writes that **sternly** is usually attributed to a horse, as a snort. When this **sternly** is used of a person, the term carries a sense of inward rage or indignation.¹⁸ When I read this, **sternly** looks like a rhetorical device, meaning the opposite of what it says. So far, I have not found a scholar taking a similar point of view.

Chrysostom¹⁹ and Cyril²⁰ take this warning about not telling anyone as a warning against seeking vainglory. The Fathers point out that in another place, Jesus tells the one he heals to spread the word.

The audience was probably farmers, averaging between six and nine acres of land. Galilee has two main towns, Tiberias and Sepphoris, into neither of which does Jesus go in the Gospel of Mark.²¹

verse 44 He said to him, “**See** that you tell no one anything ...”

Saint Jerome includes a comma with **see**, in the sense of “**see** to it.” The Greek also has a comma.

¹⁷ Origin, translated from the Latin rendering of Combefis: Ex Diversis Hom. in Matthaicum BPC, III, 245, in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

¹⁸ Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 104.

¹⁹ Saint John Chrysostom, as presented in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea*, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 289.

²⁰ Saint Cyril, Bishop and Doctor, PB 72, 555-563 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 309.

²¹ Robert H. Gundry, “Mark 10:29: Order in the List,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 471-472.

Personal Notes
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In conclusion, the readings for this Sunday transfer the filth of leprosy into the filth of **sin**, the filth of ever turning away from God, the end and purpose of all being. Genuflection is both a sign of repentance and of joy at repentance accepted, at being rejoined to the People of God. The Transfiguration offers a sight of prelapsarian **clean, sinless** humanity.