

In our Gospel reading from Mark, a leper comes to Jesus, kneels before Him and says, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” The leper has no doubt that Jesus has the power to heal him. So, the question for the leper was not “Could He?” but “*Would* He?” And so Jesus is moved with compassion, touches the leper, and says, “I do will it. Be made clean.” And the leper is healed!

Jesus’ use of power for the leper led me to reflect on how power is used, and how it needs to be used. There is a great contrast between how Jesus uses power and how the wisdom of the world sees the use of power.

When we read the Gospels, we get a good indication of the purposes for which Jesus used His power:

To heal – There are many times when Jesus healed people from sickness and drove out unclean spirits.

To increase faith - When Jesus walked on the water and calmed the storm, He was demonstrating to His disciples that their trust in Him was not misplaced.

To serve – At Cana, Jesus served His Mother and the wedding party by turning the water into wine.

To bring hope – When Jesus raised up the widow’s son, and Jairus’ daughter, and His friend Lazarus, and when He rose Himself, and appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, He was bringing hope to what was thought to be a hopeless situation.

To set things right – Even when Jesus was angry and drove the money changers out of the Temple, He was not doing it out of hatred for them, but out of “zeal” for His Father’s house.

Now let’s look at what worldly wisdom often sees as the purposes of power:

To amass property and wealth for oneself – very often this is a kind of synergistic relationship. People use money to get power to get more money, and so on. Think about why most, if not all, wars have been fought, whether you think they are justified or not – one side trying to gain territory or natural resources or dominion over another.

To have domination over others – to impose one’s will over others – sometimes to the point of genocide.

To get revenge. To have license to do whatever one wants.

Some of us may be wondering, “What does this have to do with me? I have no power.” Now there are times when we *think* we have power, or we *wish* we had power, as we are tempted to try to bend others to our will or throw our weight around, either at home or at work or even at church. Whatever power we do have, either individually or

as a community, comes from God, and we need to remember, as addicts in recovery know full well, that there are things over which we have no power. At the same time, if we do have some power or influence we are to use it in the same way that Jesus showed us – out of love and compassion, seeking peace and justice.

Power is a tricky thing. Its ability to corrupt is not just a cliché. The only way we can use power well is to follow Jesus, and to surrender to God's will. God, after all, has the ultimate power, and if we follow His will in following Jesus, we will not practice domination nor satisfy greed. Rather, we will practice love and satisfy justice.

May God continue to bless us all, and give us the grace to use power wisely.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP