

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Cycle B
February 12, 2012
Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Abraham Lincoln

Today is the 203rd birthday of Abraham Lincoln, our sixteenth and perhaps our greatest president.

Lincoln had many strengths, and one of them was his ability to bridge political chasms. He appointed to his cabinet three of his opponents for the Republican nomination.

The most notable of these was Edwin Stanton who was a fierce opponent of Lincoln and whom Lincoln appointed as Secretary of War. Lincoln explained that that he needed the strongest and best people in his cabinet and could not deprive the country of their service.

And then, as the Civil War drew to an end, Lincoln outlined a plan for Reconstruction. His plan was built on reconciliation and restoration.

It was not built on retribution and reparation that many people in the North wanted. Lincoln clearly wanted to reunite the Confederate States with the Union and create a united country.

An Example for Us

Abraham Lincoln is a good example for us as Americans and also a good example of living out today's gospel.

In this passage, a leper comes up to Jesus and says, "*If you wish, you can make me clean.*" In those days people were called lepers if they had any kind of skin condition even if it was not serious or contagious.

Usually, the hardest part of being labeled a leper was that they had to live in isolation, apart from the community. Jesus heals this man of his skin condition and even more importantly, he restores him to the community.

This is what it means for the leper to be made clean – to be restored to the community. Abraham Lincoln did this kind of thing.

He made clean, he restored to community his political opponents. And he made clean, he restored to community those who had been his Confederate enemies.

Do We Wish to Make Clean?

The question for us is: Who are today's lepers and do we wish to make them clean?

On a personal level, is there a family member or a friend whom we have not talked to for months or years? Has this happened because of some disagreement or hurtful words?

Can we reach out and try to make the relationship clean? Can we do what we can to restore this person to family or friendship?

Or on a Church level, are there persons who feel alienated from the community? Has this happened because we do not approve of something in their lifestyle?

Again, can we as a Church try to make this relationship clean by inviting them back and restoring them to community? Can we remain “right” with our faith, righteous in the gospel sense, but not self-righteous, and in this way allow Jesus to touch them as he does the leper in the gospel?

Conclusion

So, are there situations where we are called to do what Jesus does in today’s gospel?