

## **Homily – Priest’s Retreat**

**January 17, 2018**

**Our Church is at a difficult, painful, embarrassing moment. Sinful, illegal deeds done in darkness and covered up have come to light. The whole world is witness to what has happened. This is a very discouraging and depressing time, but also a moment of opportunity for all of us – especially us bishops and priests. The call to conversion, renewal, reform is loud and clear!**

**The Letter to the Hebrews reminds of the psalmist’s challenging words: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts!” We may pray daily. We may make an annual retreat. We may celebrate the Eucharist daily and go to confession regularly. However, praying is not the same as saying lots of words. Do we truly come closer to God? Making a retreat is not a time simply for catching up on sleep and socializing. Does conversion actually take place? When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, do we invite the Lord to abide in us so that others may encounter his face through us? When we confess our sins, are we truly sorry and firmly committed to ongoing conversion? If not, the darkness will continue. We will be ineffective in building up the Body of Christ.**

How can we be the face of Christ? The voice of Christ? The hands of Christ? We have a wonderful example in today's gospel. Jesus encounters a leper with a simple faith and trust in the Lord: You can make me clean. Jesus responds in a surprising way – he reaches out and first touches the leper!! Lepers were outcasts. They were considered physically and morally contagious. They could not live with their families or go to the temple to pray. The prophet Elisha did not touch Naaman the Syrian. What did this gesture of Jesus mean to the leper? There is love in that touch! There is acceptance! There is assurance of the dignity of the person! No one is excluded from God's love. The inner transformation of the leper – his attitude, his self-respect – must have leaped with joy in that simple gesture. Then being physically cured he could take the required steps to return to his family, his community, the assembly of believers in the temple. That is how it is to be the face of Christ, the voice of Christ, the hand of Christ.

Let us approach him, my brothers, right now – and ask him to lay his hand upon us and bring us healing in our whole being! Our Lady of Guadalupe is standing at our side as we ask the risen Lord for his healing touch -- for a change of heart, mind, and attitude.