



MINISTERING TO THE MARGINS

LEADER:

**+In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

God, source of all oneness, bring our hearts and our hands together. Let our love grow in action as much as in ardor. Teach us to serve you with the light of our minds, the heart of our feelings, and the strength of our bodies.

(Adapted from *Praying with Vincent de Paul*, Thomas McKenna, p. 63)

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark

A leper came to Jesus, begging on his knees. "If you want to, you can cleanse me." Deeply moved, Jesus put out his hand, touched him, and said, "I want to. Be clean." Then and there the leprosy was gone, his skin smooth and healthy. (Mk. 1:40-41)

MUSIC: Leper's Song – October Wedding's Sabbath

<i>If you want to you can touch me</i>	<i>Rob this broken soul of its vanity</i>
<i>You can heal me</i>	<i>And restore me</i>
<i>If you want to you can touch me</i>	
<i>You can heal me now, now</i>	<i>I let my walls come down</i>
	<i>I let my walls come down</i>
<i>If you want to you can change me</i>	<i>I let my walls come down</i>
<i>You can make me new</i>	
<i>Rob this twisted heart of its misery</i>	<i>Now I feel your power</i>
	<i>Now I know your touch</i>
<i>If you want to You can take me</i>	
<i>You can use me now</i>	<i>Now I see your love</i>
<i>If you want to You can break me</i>	<i>And I know you</i>
<i>You can turn me inside out</i>	<i>And I know you</i>

READER 1:

We are encouraged to stand with the tax collector and the prostitute, the widow, orphan, and stranger, precisely because they are the judged, the scapegoated, the less-than, whose chances are taken away well before they are given. The principal cause of suffering for the leper is not an annoying, smelly, itchy skin disease but rather having to live outside the camp. So, the call is to stand with them, so that the margins get erased and they are welcomed back inside. Jesus doesn't think twice: he touches the lepers before he gets around to healing them. (p.166)

READER 2

The original covenantal relationship in the Hebrew Bible... went like this: "As I have loved you, so must you have a special, preferential, favored love for the widow, orphan, and stranger." God knows that these folks know what it's like to be cut off. And because they know this

particular suffering, God finds them trustworthy to lead and guide the rest of us to the birth of a new inclusion, to the exquisite mutuality of kinship: God's dream come true. (p. 165)

READER 3

The lowly place is the locus of our true liberation. Walking with the poor, who are our friends, is mutually transforming and announces to the world something radically new. The poor, Jesus says, will enter this kinship before the rest of us, because that's what guides do. They go ahead of us. They get us there. (p. 165)

READER 4

The call to the margins, led by those we find there, is exhilarating and life-giving and renews our nobility and purpose. For this, we all long. The time is now, as never before, to put terror and defense to one side and find our human connection on the margins... After all, our following of Jesus always has less to do with our words and more to do with our lives. (p. 167)

SILENT REFLECTION

LEADER: Let us pray...

For the Church – that we be a people conspicuous for our love for all on the margins, we pray to the Lord... R. Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are “outside the circle”, the refugees, the LGBT community, the homeless, the addicts, the elderly and the poor, we pray to the Lord... R.

For a renewal of zeal within each of us in ministering to those who are on the margins – that we may not only see, but also do, we pray to the Lord... R.

For the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth and for all Seton Associates – that we may continue to birth the mission of charity and community started by our founders, we pray to the Lord... R.

For what else do we pray? ...

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven...

LEADER:

Loving Father, we place these intentions at your feet, believing in your constant love and trusting in the Spirit who continues to guide us. We make these prayers in Jesus' name.

ALL: Amen.

SIGN OF PEACE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reread the lyrics to the opening song. Who is the “you”? Who is the “me”?
 2. What are some different kinds of margins?
 3. Think of a person in your life who is on the margins. How have you/how can you reach out to him/her?
 4. Tell about a time when someone broke down barriers - “erased the margins” – to include or to touch you.
 5. Tell about a time when someone who was “outside the circle” actually led you back to your true self.
 6. How does living the charism of charity as a Seton Associate speak to the theme of today’s prayer?
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CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER: Let us pray.

ALL:

O Jesus, servant to all humankind, give me the vision and the humility to see you in other people, especially in those who are poor and suffering. Grant me the courage and compassion to be your hands, your wisdom and your heart in service to our sisters and brothers.

(Praying with Elizabeth Seton, Margaret Alderman and Josephine Burns, p. 76)

This is my prayer to you, O (Father)! Give me your special favor. Pour out your truth and mercy on me in an abundance that will enable me to put your love into practice, filling me with true affection for you, for my neighbor, and also for myself.

(Common Rules – Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission, vol. 10, p. 474-475)

LEADER:

O Holy Spirit, bless us as we go forth from this gathering today... may everything we do flow from your inspiration and continue with your help, so that all our prayers and works may begin in you and by you be happily ended. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(Shorter Book of Blessings, p. 203)

ALL: Amen