

JANUARY 13, 2022  
Thursday of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week in OT  
Mark 1: 40-45

“GOD HAS HIS OWN PLAN.”

Some people are superstitious believers. They rely on talisman or charm or any other things for luck or answers to their questions. They believe in horoscope, magic cards or rituals that are in contradiction to our belief in God, the most powerful One. This is presented in our first reading today. The Israelites put God just as a ‘charm’ who can defeat the enemy without recognizing their own sinfulness and unfaithfulness. Instead of asking forgiveness from their sinful ways, they put the God of Israel as a mere ‘object’ of their selfish motive. After their defeat with Philistines wherein 4,000 Israelites men killed, the leaders saw the message from God’s displeasure than their enemy’s military superiority. They decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the battle with a pagan notion that they will be protected instead of changing their ways.

“The Israelites carried the Ark with them into battle. They were fully confident that with God's presence among them, they would not be defeated this time. It did not actually help that the Ark was accompanied by the two wicked sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas. They are using the Ark in a way which reduced it to the level of a pagan charm. For such desecrations they would pay a high price. When the Ark arrived among them, the people sent up such a war cry that the Philistines were alarmed. Even if they were fearful, the Philistines only hope was to fight with everything they had. Despite the presence of the Ark, there was another disastrous defeat for the Israelites in which 30,000 died (probably an inflated figure to emphasise the calamity of the defeat). And what was worse, the Ark of the Covenant was carried off by the victors. It is perfectly clear that the defeat was punishment for sins which even the presence of the Ark could not avert. Superstitious though they were – the Israelites trick nearly worked – the Philistines in

desperation set aside their superstitious fears, used the resources they had and won the victory.”<sup>1</sup>

My sisters and brothers, sometimes we are like the Israelites. We rely on superstitious belief or put our luck on things of earth. “We can identify the statue, or the picture, or the medal with the person they represent and endow with them with a kind of magic power by which we think we can manipulate not only events and other people but even God himself. But God must always remain utterly free. It is not for us to manipulate Him but to know what His will is and to accept it, on the principle that God always wants what is best for us (although it may not, in the short term, seem like that). We pray to Our Lady and the saints not to tell them to twist God's arm on our behalf but to help us, to be like them and to accept God's will in all things.”<sup>2</sup>

Let us rely only in God and put our trust in Him. Let us pray that we may understand and conform our will to His will, hard sometimes it may be. Like the man with leprosy in our gospel, let us say ‘If you choose, you can make me clean’ – a humble and confident request. A request that we too can make. The response of Jesus is immediate because He sees what is in his heart and the man really have faith in Jesus. Jesus will do the same to us, just be patient and let Jesus do His will not our will be done. Keep on praying do not stop even if we are already exhausted, tired, drained and questioning when it will end our difficulties, problems and even this pandemic. The time is not yet come but Jesus assured us it will come to an end, have faith in Him, He has its own plan. We may not understand today, but we will understand later.

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<sup>1</sup> [livingspace.sacredspace.ie](http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*