

Gospel Reflection by Fr. Christopher Szarke

This Gospel is about how we might not recognize the dignity that God bestows upon everyone.

St. Francis of Assisi, growing up in privilege, had been very sheltered. The sight of lepers was upsetting to Francis and he was disgusted by their odor. He went to great lengths to avoid their home.

One day Francis was on his horse in an open field when a leper approached him, asking for his cloak. Francis hesitated, and then got off his horse, gave the leper his cloak and the coins he carried. Francis did the unthinkable, given his earlier aversion when he walked past the leper colony. Francis kissed the leper.

As Francis got back on the horse, he looked back at the leper and did not see him. The open fields did not have a single person as far as the eye could see. Francis was puzzled.

Then he recognized that he had encountered Christ in the leper.

This is our invitation when we encounter another person, because all are created in the image of Christ. This is the challenge that we are called to do also whenever we encounter another whose image doesn't resemble what we understand Christ to be. That person is also created in the image of Christ. Being in Christ's image, that person will be called to participate in the harvest. None of us have the right to hinder them through prejudice, fear, or oppression. God has the work of the harvest for each of us. Amen.