

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B  
Which program am I with?

Deacon Mark Kelly

Jews in Jesus' time saw illness as punishment for some kind of sin or unfaithfulness. Jesus wasn't having any of that! His message is that God doesn't see them that way. Instead Jesus is especially devoted to the ill, marginal, unwashed and unwanted above everyone else. He came nearest to those who were seen as God's forsaken, touching the lepers (*Mark 1:40-45*) whom no-one else would touch, assuring them of the Father's boundless love and restoring their dignity.

Beyond the crippling physical effects of bodily disease, the overwhelming tragedy of these sufferers is the shame and humiliation of being shunned as dirty and repulsive. Ostracism and exclusion from normal lives and participation in community activities and events eroded their dignity. We meet such people in the streets of our towns today.

**Jesus Program:** Caring lovingly for the unwashed and unwanted. Catholic icons like Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Mary McKillop, Pope Francis and other Christians and non-Christians have made Christ-like care their life's work. Ambiguously Christian, Eric Blair (aka George Orwell), the profoundly influential author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*, lovingly served the dirty, shunned and unwanted, those with horrendous skin conditions; cleaning and binding disgusting ulcers and wounds, restoring dignity to the ostracised.

**Anti-Jesus Program:** Excluding from their love and the community's care those who don't fit a particular work ethic or moral code, class, ethnicity, race or gender profile. Those (including erstwhile Christians) who by act or omission, directly or indirectly, shun, ostracise, berate, deprive, neglect and humiliate the poor, unwashed, lonely, ill, frightened or fleeing are following the anti-Jesus program.

Jesus' followers must bind and comfort where we can, support the experts who can do what is beyond us and, as citizens and taxpayers, ensure our governments wisely and compassionately spend our resources.