

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Sunday, 13 October 2019
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 17:11-19

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“To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch Heaven.” (Johannes A. Gaertner).

Once a lady came to me with her child. She told her daughter, “greet and thank Father because he is the one who baptized you...” Although I have baptized so many children in my priestly ministry, it is the first time I received a word of thanks. The central theme of today’s readings is gratitude. Although we receive so many blessings from God, we are very scarce to thank God. We need to thank God moment by moment for the gifts that God has lavished upon us.

Gratefulness, another word which expresses gratitude of heart and thankful disposition, is related to grace-which means the release of loveliness. Gratitude is the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving.

God is gracious in touching people’s lives. The response to such graciousness should be prayerful worship and thanksgiving. In the first reading, an Aramean army commander seeks healing from God of Israel. Naaman receives the permission of king of Aram to travel to Israel in search of healing. Naaman is directed to the prophet Elisha. When told to do a simple plunging in the dirty Jordan river, he at first refuses, since the rivers of his homeland are cleaner and mightier than the Jordan. When he is finally convinced to do what the prophet of God tells him, he is cleansed of skin disease. Today’s passage begins as Naaman plunges into the Jordan and then wants to offer gifts to Elisha, but the prophet refuses the gifts. The healed man requests some of the dirt of the land of Israel so that he may return home and he can still be a part of the land where there is God who heals extraordinarily through ordinary means.

The responsorial psalm proclaims the good news that God continues to touch all people with divine, saving power. God’s gift of healing, wholeness, salvation is given to all who seek it. In response to it, joyful praise and thanksgiving is to be lifted up to God.

In the second reading his second letter to Timothy, St Paul advises his disciple to be grateful to God even in his physical sufferings and amid the dangers associated with spreading the word of God, because God will always be faithful to His people.

In today’s gospel we hear a story about ten people whose lives are changed in a way we cannot comprehend. We cannot in this day and age fully grasp what it means to go from being a leper to being a no leper. They have heard about the divine healing power that Jesus has manifested in other places. Jesus sends them to

the priests who were the officials who could lift their exile from others by declaring the former lepers clean and able to return to the rest of society. On the way they realize the healing that has taken place. Nine continue their mission to the priests to be declared clean, while one immediately returns to Jesus to express his gratitude for the healing, and he is a Samaritan, a hated foreigner to the Jews.

This is but one of many such examples of ingratitude that occurred during Christ's public ministry, most of those He miraculously cured forget to thank Him. In today's incident there is one, and he is the one least expected to do so, who had the decency to return and thank his benefactor. This pleased our Lord and led Him to remark on the ingratitude of the others. "Were not all ten made whole, where are the other nine?"

He was surprised and also sad for their sakes, not for his own. They missed greater graces through this lack of appreciation and gratitude.

All ten showed great faith and confidence in Jesus' power to heal. They had not heard Him preach nor had they seen any of His miracles. They lived in isolation Camps, yet they believed the reports they had heard. They all were very obedient too. They set off for Jerusalem to carry out the command of Jesus, even though their leprosy had not yet left them.

In all of this it was their own self-interest which came first in the minds of the nine Jews. Once they found their leprosy gone all they thought of was their own good fortune. Their Benefactor was quickly forgotten. The Samaritan's first thought, on the other hand, was of the one who had healed him. He was as delighted as the others with his cure but being generous and thoughtful for others, he felt it his bounden duty to return and thank the man who had done this miraculous good turn.

While we are ashamed of our fellow men who were so ungrateful, and who treated the loving Jesus so shamefully, let us see if we have improved very much in our way of acting towards our Savior. Those Jewish lepers did not know that He was the Son of God who assumed human nature, became man, in order to raise us up to a new supernatural status. He gave them the gift of physical help for thirty, forty, or may be sixty years more. We know that He has come to give us an eternal life-a life that will last forever, a life free from all troubles and worries "where all tears will be wiped away and death shall be no more".

With this knowledge then of what Christ means to us, of what His incarnation has won for us, of the eternal freedom from all sickness and death which His human life, death and resurrection have put at our disposal, how can any real Christian ever cease thanking Him, could there be such a being as an ungrateful Christian on earth?

Unfortunately, there is not only one such ungrateful being, but there are millions of them. How many of us are numbered amongst these ungrateful ones? There are those of us who think of God only when we are in difficulties. While things are going well, when there is no sickness in the home, when our business is prospering, when there is peace all around us, how many times in the week do we

say, "thank you, God you are very good to me." When trouble strikes it is a different matter. We rush to church, we implore God to have pity on us, we make novenas to our special saints. This is not wrong. What is wrong, however, is that we forget to thank God all the time that He was giving us spiritual and temporal favors.

How often have we been ungrateful to our teachers, pastors and neighbors? Do we express gratitude to God for his abundant help and mercy towards us? Are we gracious, kind, and merciful towards our neighbor in their time of need and support?

Let us ask God's blessings so that we may never fail to recognize His loving kindness and mercy towards us. May He fill our hearts with compassion and thanksgiving, and free us from ingratitude and discontentment. May He help us to count our blessings with a grateful heart and to give thanks in all circumstances. Let us show our gratitude to our forgiving God by forgiving others, and to a loving God by radiating His love mercy and compassion to others.

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