

Homily of Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

2 Kings 5:14-17; Psalm 98:1, 2-4; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19

The readings of today invite us to reflect on the importance of gratitude. When Naaman bathed in the River Jordan as directed by Elisha, "he was cleansed of his leprosy." He was grateful to God and returned to Elisha with a gift to express his gratitude. Naaman was Syrian. Syria, then, was considered a pagan territory because they were Baal worshippers. Naaman said to Elisha, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant." Ironically, this happened during the last years of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, and their children who led the Israelites to idolatry. While the Chosen People were ungrateful to God by worshipping pagan gods, Naaman the Syrian expressed gratitude to God and proclaimed, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel."

In today's gospel, Jesus healed ten lepers. Nine were Jews, and one was a Samaritan. Again, the nine Jews who were healed did not return to Jesus to express gratitude. The Samaritan did. The Jews looked down on the Samaritans as pagans and foreigners. Yet, it was the 'pagan' (the foreigner) "who returned [to Jesus] glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him." Jesus emphasizes the importance of gratitude by asking, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"

Some of us are like the nine Jews who took their healing for granted. Many times, we take our blessings for granted by not showing appreciation. We are invited to limit our complaints, fault finding, whining, and nagging, and to increase our gratefulness, appreciation and thanks.

A story is told of an 80-year-old man who recovered from Covid-19. In his bill was \$5,000 per day for ventilator. The old man burst into tears. When the hospital staff inquired why he was crying, wondering whether it was because of the high bill. The man said, "I am not crying because of the bill. I can afford to pay. I am crying because I have been breathing God's air for 80 years free of charge, but have to pay \$5,000 per day for using a ventilator. I realize now how much I owe God."

Those who cry because they have no shoes need to remember that there are people who have no feet. Those who are extravagant and wasteful need to realize that there are hungry and disadvantaged people. Those who are unhappy with the little they have need to know that there are many people praying and wishing to have that much.

Ingratitude can bring dire consequences. For example, in the Old Testament, the journey of forty days became forty years for the Israelites due to their ingratitude; and the ungrateful generations did not reach the Promised Land (Numbers 14:34).

St. Paul urges us, "Give thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus to God the Father" (Ephesians 5:20). "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). The Psalmist says, "Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me." Giving gratitude to God is a recognition that all we have is a gift from God (1 Corinthians 4:7).

There is power in the expression of gratitude:

Expression of gratitude is a prayer in itself that God gives us more opportunities to thank him. Ingratitude to God is a dishonor to him.

Expression of gratitude encourages, enlivens and empowers. Lack of gratitude discourages and diminishes.

Expression of gratitude is uplifting and promotes healthy environments. Ingratitude is sickening, creates anxiety, stress, aches and pains.

Expression of gratitude is delightful. Ingratitude is repulsive.

Expression of gratitude brings more blessings. Ingratitude takes away blessings.

The second reading says, "If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are faithful, he remains faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). This statement about the possibility of God denying us need not surprise anyone because ingratitude is the worst of vices. And according to St. Ignatius of Loyola, the cause and origin of all evils and sins is the sin of ingratitude to God.

O Lord, grant us a grateful heart. Amen.

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