

Homily of Twenty-Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

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 a 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.” This happened during the last years of the reign of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, and their children who, on the contrary, 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. The nine Jews took their healing for granted and did not return to Jesus to express gratitude. The Samaritan did. Meanwhile, 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 showing no appreciation. We are invited to limit our complaints, fault finding, whining, and nagging, and to increase our gratitude.

A story is told of an 80-year-old man who recovered from Covid-19 during the Pandemic. In his bill was \$5,000 charge per day for use of ventilator. He could not hold back tears. When he was asked why he was crying, whether it was because of the high bill. He said, “I am not crying because of the bill. I have a good health insurance and I can handle the co-pay. I am crying because all my life I had taken God’s free air that I breathe for granted, but have to pay \$5,000 per day for use of ventilator.”

There is a saying that those who cry because they have no shoes need to realize that there are people who have no feet. This is to say that those who are not content and are unhappy with what they have need to know that there are people who are living in abject poverty. Failure to give thanks and acknowledge God’s blessings and provisions is a sin of ingratitude. It is also a sin of ingratitude to be extravagant and wasteful failing to realize that there are people who are hungry and starving.

Another story, a rich man looked out of his window and saw a poor man picking up things from his trash can, he said, “Thank God I am not poor.” The poor man looked around and saw a naked man misbehaving on the street, he said, “Thank God I am not mad.” The mad man looked ahead and saw an ambulance carrying a sick person, he said, “Thank God I am not sick.” A sick person in a hospital saw a trolley carry a dead body to the mortuary, he said, “Thank God that I am not dead.” Why not thank God today for all your blessings and for the gift of life? Each of us has something for which to be grateful to God.

The spirit of gratitude has spiritual effects in our relationship with God and our fellow human beings. It is a gift from God for our good. Common Preface V of Eucharistic celebration prays, “For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation ...” The Psalmist says, “Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me.” Expression of gratitude in itself is a prayer that God offer us more opportunities to express gratitude to him.

For us human beings, expression of gratitude is delightful, encourages, enlivens, and empowers. Ingratitude discourages, diminishes, and is repulsive. Expression of gratitude is uplifting and promotes healthy environments. Ingratitude is sickening, creates anxiety, stress, aches, and pains.

Both in our relationship with God and our fellow human beings, expression of gratitude multiplies blessings. Ingratitude denies blessings.

We hear it often said that ingratitude is the worst of all vices. St. Ignatius of Loyola explains why. He says, “The cause and origin of all evils and sins is the sin of ingratitude.”

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).

O Lord, grant us a grateful heart. Amen.

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