

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of gratitude as a sign of our recognition to the Lord for the many blessings received from him in life. The first reading describes the healing of Naaman, the official from Syria, who was cured from leprosy by plunging in the waters of the Jordan following the recommendation of the prophet Elisha.

Once Naaman realized that he was cured from his illness, he went back to the man of God in order to bring gifts as a sign of acknowledgment and to confess the uniqueness of the God of Israel as the only one worthy of being worshiped and adored in all the earth.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the God of all the nations. He gives salvation to anyone who invokes him. Naaman, the Syrian, who was not a member of the chosen people, received salvation like any people and pledged to worship the God of Israel. Another point is the idea that God is the master of the destiny of people and the fate of individuals. Whatever might be the progress of medicine and the modern medical sciences, it is God who heals through the skills of physicians and the medical knowledge. Therefore, we have to be grateful to him and, in particular, when new medical discoveries are brought to the world and we are healed from our sicknesses and diseases.

All that helps us understand the reaction of Jesus in today's Gospel as he realized that just one of the ten lepers came back in glorifying God. As in the first reading, the one who returned was a foreigner, a Samaritan, and Jesus acknowledged his faith and confirmed that it was because of it that he was saved.

Once the leper was healed, Jesus sent him to show himself to the priest in the temple. As a matter of fact, it was a law in Israel that anyone who was cleansed from leprosy had to show himself to the priest in sign of witness and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

But, what is most important in the present case is the fact that by sending the healed leper to see a priest, Jesus is recognizing the importance of the established religious structure. Today the Church stands for that religious structure of the past. The Church, indeed, is the space where we come together as God's people to praise the Lord, to listen to his word and to receive him in the Blessed Sacrament. If that is the case, it is unfortunate, then, that some people find it normal to never go to Church and stay home without joining their brothers and sisters in prayer. What they do not realize is that any isolation on their part will eventually weaken them in their faith.

Another point is that by sending the healed leper to see the priest, Jesus is obeying the law and wants him, likewise, to obey the law. There is no doubt that Jesus very often had problems with the guardian of the law in the temple. And yet, he still obeys the law and wants us to do so. By doing so, Jesus wants to invite us to respect the laws of the Church even if, as individuals, we feel uncomfortable about some of its stipulations and requirements.

That being said, the question we cannot help asking is to know why Jesus is insisting on the return of this healed leper to give thanks to God? What good would we gain by knowing what he did?

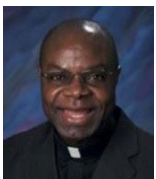
By insisting on the action of this one leper who returned to give thanks to God, Jesus is warning us against the common human failing of ingratitude. Sometimes converts and new comers to faith are more appreciative and grateful for all that God has done for them than are those who have always been Christians and who, at times, take it for granted.

We have to take this warning of Jesus seriously, because human experience has taught us that very often, once people obtain what they want, they never come back. How often have we been ungrateful to our parents! The truth, however, is that without them we would not have been who we are today. – I am not discussing the evolution of the relationship with them over the years or whether they have been bad or good parents -. And yet, some people do not talk to their parents. Others do not call them at all even once a year. Some others take pleasure in loving their spouses, but they push them to cut off any relationship with their parents.

How often have we been ungrateful to one another! And yet, we know that human life would be impossible without the presence of so many people whose service we benefit from in making our life easy. What would our life be without the presence of the police, teachers, doctors, priests, mechanics, farmers, business people of all kind, etc? Of course, it is true that sometimes people do for us things we are incapable of repaying; but the tragedy is that we often do not even try to repay it.

How often have we been ungrateful to God! It happens sometimes that when we have some troubles, we pray with intensity and ask God for help us. But, once the bad time is over, we forget him and we go our way as though nothing has happened to us at all.

Let us ask Jesus to help us be thankful to God for his many blessings toward us. Let us acknowledge our illness before him and ask him to heal us body and mind. Let us ask him also that in our sufferings he gives us the courage of faithfulness so that by dying with him we come to live with him, and by persevering we come to reign with him. May God bless you all!



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2 Kings 5, 14-17; 2Timothy 2, 8-13; Luke 17, 11-19