

## Thanksgiving Homily 2020

I was listening to the radio the other day. The caller was a Dad telling a story about his daughter. In their home, they have a change jar, a jar for loose change. Any loose change found around the house, either in the laundry, or wherever, is put into the change jar. Well the dad was in the bathroom, and he noticed change on the floor. So he picked it up and put it in the change jar. Not too much time passed, the dad was downstairs, and he hears his daughter yelling “Who took my change?” Apparently, as she was undressing in the bathroom, change had fallen out of her jeans pockets, and onto the floor. And she wanted her change back. The dad was thinking, “Is she kidding me? Her change? Her change that came from money that I gave her? Change that fell out of pockets of jeans that I had bought her with my money, on the bathroom floor in the house that I own, down the hall from her bedroom, with a bed and furniture in it that I bought her with my money? And she wants HER change back? How ungrateful is she going to get? As he was about to go upstairs and declare himself to his daughter, he could hear Our Blessed Lord in his mind saying, “Um, Dad, spending money that you gave her? Jeans that you

bought? In the house that you own? Bedroom with furniture that you bought with your money?” Sorry. Who gave you the money? Who gave you the house? Her furniture? I did. And how ungrateful are you going to get? So in effect, God’s money. God’s jeans. God’s house. God’s furniture. God’s change.

This story comes to mind today as gratitude, or lack of gratitude, is clearly the operative word in the gospel, the operative word for Thanksgiving. We heard today, at least for many of us, the well-known story of ten lepers who met Jesus. These ten individuals were utter outcasts in society. They weren’t merely sick. Because of their disease, a highly contagious one, theirs wasn’t a 14-day quarantine. Theirs was a life-long quarantine from the rest of the people.

A leper wasn’t allowed to live anywhere near the village. He or she could have no interaction with, or contact with another person who was not a leper. On seeing another person who was not like them, a leper had to yell out at the top of his or her voice, “unclean, unclean!” so as to warn the person coming that a leper was there. On top of that, they were shackled with a bell they had to ring that would serve the same

purpose: to keep people away from them. A leper's life was one of total isolation. There was:

- ✓ no friendship,
- ✓ no love,
- ✓ no family gatherings,
- ✓ and perhaps, worst of all, no hope.

Because of the disease and the fear of it spreading, a leper was not even allowed to be touched.

Can you imagine a life where you're never hugged? I was slow dancing with a long-time friend of mine a few years ago, whose husband died three years before that evening, and as we danced, she said, "Dan this is the first time I've been held longer than hug since Charles died." I don't remember all that we talked about that night, but I do remember her saying that. "Dan this is the first time I've been held longer than hug since Charles died." Lepers:

- ✓ never hugged,
- ✓ never kissed,
- ✓ never even a handshake.

Such was their life, or lack thereof.

But these ten lepers were delivered from a miserable existence by the power and the mercy of Our Blessed Lord,

who in His great love cured them of their disease. Suddenly everything was well.

- ✓ They could go home.
- ✓ They could sit down with family and friends.
- ✓ They could reenter society.
- ✓ They could let their sore throats heal after years of yelling.
- ✓ They could unshackle their bell and throw it as far as they could.
- ✓ They could be touched again.

Yet after receiving all of these graces, only one even bothered to come back to Jesus and say thank you? It did not even occur to the other nine to go back to Jesus and say thank you?

This passage in the gospel, I would suggest, is meant to serve the same purpose as the story told on the radio. Even though the Dad was talking about his daughter, and all that he did for her, that story led him and me to reflect on his and my life, and all that God had done for the Dad and me.

Likewise, as we neither see nor hear the gratitude of the nine lepers, who had been given back their lives by Jesus, this passage is supposed to provoke us to ask whether or not we are men and women, who daily, regularly, pour out our

thanksgiving and gratitude to God, or if we are like that teenage daughter or the nine lepers, who take for granted all that God has done, and is doing right now, for each of us.

How many of us, when we entered this Church this morning, took the time to look up, past our masks, which seem to occupy so much of our attention these days, to see Jesus crucified, out of love for us, so that, not a bell, but our sins would be unshackled so we could live forever, and got down on our knees, and said, “Thank you Lord.” Surely none of can think that we were entitled to THAT (point to the crucifix). How many of us, when we woke up this morning, took the time to say, “Thank you Lord” for the great gift of life, or did we take that for granted, and start a mental checklist of everything we need to do today to get ready for a meal that is supposed to say thank you for us?

How many of us make it a point, after receiving our Lord in the Eucharist, a word which means “thanksgiving” to get down on our knees, or to sit and take some time to say thank you for the amazing gift of the Eucharist, or does that too, become routine, or worse, an obligation? To feed on God – an obligation? How many people receive Holy Communion throughout the entire world, walk straight to the door, and

never saying “thank you?” How can we take for granted all that God has done for us? But we do. I do.

With that in mind, let me make a simple suggestion, a challenge really, for all of us, myself very much included. Starting this Thanksgiving, starting today, let’s not let a day go by, without making time, either before we go to bed, or we wake up in the morning, to thank God for 10 things each day. Gratitude, I once heard someone say, is the very heart of prayer. May our heavenly Father regularly hear us, His sons and daughters, say thank you.