

Twenty-Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
October 12, 2019

Readings:

2 Kings 5:14-1

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Luke 17:11-19

The first reading and the gospel today both tell us stories about lepers.

Lepers in Jesus' time and in the time of the Old Testament were complete outcast.

They were not allowed to be near anyone not even their family members.

They could only associate with their own kind, with those who had leprosy.

Another factor that we might not recognize was that in the ancient world disease was associated with sin.

So lepers were not only considered unclean on the outside but also unclean on the inside as well.

Today we do not look upon disease as a result of sin or we certainly should not.

We do not force people to live in isolation because of illness.

However, we surely have people who are isolated or are not included because they dress differently, look different, speak a different language or for many other reasons.

We also have isolation because of sin, our sin which isolates us from God and from one another.

You know when we just can not bring ourselves to forgive that person who hurt us.

We are also isolated by the sin of the community when we collectively see injustice and do nothing about it.

So we can not relate to the story of the lepers directly but we have our own form of leprosy.

There is something that Naaman and the ten lepers have in common.

Each of them when seeking a cure was asked to do something.

Naaman was asked to bath in the Jordan.

Initially he refused to do this but finally agreed.

The ten lepers were asked to present themselves to the priest.

This was required to prove that they were clean.

Both had faith enough in the Lord that they did what was asked of them and they were cured.

We too must realize that in God we can find cures for our own forms of leprosy, for our sins.

We too must have faith and trust in God's goodness and mercy.

We are reminded that God is ever faithful to us we in turn are to be faithful to God.

One of the aspects of being faithful to God is being grateful.

We have many reasons to be grateful but in all honesty we normally do not spend much time focusing on these things.

Things that went wrong or need fixing typically take up much more of our time and energy.

These things need our attention but not to the detriment of recognizing all that is good and right.

As long as we exist, we give no notice to this.

However if our heart should skip a beat you can bet it will get our immediate attention.

Because the negative gets so much attention we are much better at prayers of petition than those of thanksgiving.

Being grateful is something we have to work at it is not something that comes automatically.

It is something we learn.

We teach our children this from a very early age but we sometimes forget.

One source of learning about gratitude is the poor.

Henri Nouwen in his book "Gracias! A Latin American Journal" said this,

"Gratitude is one of the most visible characteristics of the poor that I have come to know.

I am always surrounded by words of thanks.

Thanks for your visit, your blessing, your sermon, your prayer, your gifts, your presence with us...

Not only are the poor grateful for life they celebrate life constantly...

All of life is a gift a gift to be shared." 2

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We can learn from the poor to celebrate life as a gift.

We can also learn from the Jewish tradition to express our gratitude in words.

Listen to these expressions of gratitude to God.

On eating a season fruit for the first time in the season,

“Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this season.”

On hearing thunder,

“Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, whose strength and power fills the universe.”

On seeing an exceptionally beautiful person, tree, or field,

“Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has this in his universe.”

From the Jewish tradition we can learn to put our gratitude in words.

When we come together to celebrate the Eucharist we come to give thanks.

Eucharist in fact means “thanksgiving”.

We give thanks for our greatest gift, the gift of the Paschal Mystery, the gift of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection that we might have eternal life.

One of the ten lepers realizing he had been healed returned glorifying God and gave thanks.

May we recognize the healing in our lives, the blessings in each day and may we give thanks each and every day both in words and in action.