

## **October 13, 2019**

2 Kgs 5:14-17; 2 Tim 2:8-13; Lk 17:11-19

We often look to much to this world for the healing we need in life. We often do not look enough to the mysterious ways in which God can do things in our lives through supernatural intervention and through the sacraments. Today's readings point to the power of God working through the ordinary, the power of God working great change and reconciliation without a great flash or fanfare, and they hint at the existence to come past this one - and ultimate healing.

In the Gospel, ten lepers approach Jesus. They say: *Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!* They are ill, rejected, outcast, deformed, considered "dirty." They may have heard about Jesus the wonder-worker who could cure people. In this "wonder worker" they may have thought that they had found the solution - some guy with special powers that they could go to and have him heal them. Humans going to a human to fix the problem; humans going to a human to make them whole. This is similar to the situation in the first reading. Earlier in the story (before the part we heard today) Naaman comes from a foreign land because he has heard that there is a prophet in Israel that can cure him. He has brought a gift to pay this person with, and has letters of introduction from his king. When he gets to Elisha, Elisha does not come out to him at all but sends a message telling him to wash in the river to be healed. He makes it clear that he is not the one doing the healing. Naaman is disappointed, he says *I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.* He storms off upset, his servants convince him to wash - he does and is cured.

In the Gospel Jesus also defies expectations. He does not come over and touch them and transmit power of healing (as he does in other situations) - he just tells them to go off and show themselves to the priests. They all go off. They do the simple thing at Jesus' command and, like Naaman, they are cured. Naaman has true gratitude and goes right back to Elisha after he is cured and offers him payment - Elisha will not accept it - he is trying to make the point that he was not the one responsible and would not take payment for what God had done. Naaman gets the point and gives the credit and his thanks to God saying: *Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.* He has realized that although humans can be instruments in God's hands, all healing - and in fact all good things - come from this true God. He is healed in body and in mind - no Leprosy in his body and his mind has come to faith in God.

In the Gospel, only one of the Lepers has the gratitude of Naaman and comes back to thank Jesus. This man is a foreigner (like Naaman was) a powerful symbol from Jesus that the healing he brings is not only for Israel. The story of Naaman, and this healing of Jesus, show that a simple act (that seems to be insignificant and of no value) can be used by God to bring about a remarkable result. The story of Naaman being healed by simply washing in the river is seen as a prefiguring of the sacrament of Baptism. In the sacraments, a simple act that looks insignificant (pouring of water on the head, anointing with oil, representing the narrative of the Last Supper) causes a great thing to happen. God works through simple actions and through ministers to allow power to come forth. In the story of Naaman, the invisible God worked a healing of body and mind without any display at all - Elisha was admittedly just an instrument who did nothing to make it happen. The Gospel story is a bit different. Jesus, unlike Elisha takes credit for the healing. When the Leper bows at his feet he says: *Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?* Jesus shows that he is more than an instrument - he is God - and as God he can do more than simply heal the body and mind.

In the Gospel there is another level of healing that occurs. Jesus says to the one man who returned to give thanks: *Stand up and go, your faith has saved you.* He was not talking about the bodily healing - all ten got that, nor was he talking about mental awareness alone, they all had the faith to go off to the priests to be certified as clean. What did the faith of this man who fell at the feet of Jesus gain him ... to be saved - in other words, healed in spirit. In Baptism, and in the sacrament of Reconciliation, there is a cleansing of sin - which like Leprosy causes disfigurement, disease, and alienation of our soul from God and others. It is this saving effect of baptism that we hear in the second reading: *If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him.*

Two levels of healing are presented in the readings, the bodily and the spiritual. The good things and the healing we receive in this earthly life should cause us to look in faith to the source of that good, to the God who is also the source of everlasting life. God does indeed work in ordinary looking events, in our obedience to Jesus' simple commands which we undertake in faith, and in the Sacraments where Jesus becomes present to heal. As we approach Jesus in the Eucharist today, can we put ourselves at the feet of Jesus and thank him for the good things we have received. Like the leper who returned, can we see in Jesus the same God who is that the source of all good in this life, and the source of the healing which opens the way to the next life.