

Grateful 100% of the Time

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

October 13, 2019

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In today's Gospel from *Luke*, Jesus heals ten lepers and only one of them comes back to say 'thank you.' For as much as it bothers me that the other 9 took their healing for granted, I often think that maybe this is a story about my own life and how I too am only grateful 10% of the time. 9 times out of 10, I probably move on to the next thing without a second thought. Maybe you do the same. Our faith, however, asks us to be grateful 100% of the time, 10 times out of 10, 'in all circumstances,' which is really hard to do, especially when we feel misunderstood, hurt, or victimized.

An example of a man of faith who reached the point of being grateful 100% of the time was the French Trappist monk Christian de Chergé. As a priest and monk living in Algeria, he dedicated himself to Islamic-Christian dialogue and didn't let religious differences get in the way of his friendships. Once religious extremists entered their town of Tibhirine in the 1990s, however, he and his fellow monks at the monastery of Mount Atlas had a nearly impossible decision to make: flee the area for their own safety or stay in the monastery to be in solidarity with the land and people they loved. This was a difficult decision and took some serious discernment. In the end, they simply and heroically decided to stay. In March 1996, the 7 monks mysteriously disappeared during the night. It was later revealed that they were all beheaded on May 21, 1996, but no one knows for sure who did it.

Christian had every right to be ungrateful. His life was under threat and his faith in God didn't provide him with security. Before his death, he

wrote a letter to his family that was only to be opened if and when he died. After his death, the letter was opened and of all things, it was a thank you note. It said, "In this 'thank you,' which is said for everything in my life, I certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today...and you also, friend of my final moment, who would not be aware of what you were doing. Yes, for you too, I want to say 'thank you' and à *Dieu*, whom I have seen through you. May we meet again in Paradise as two blessed and good thieves, if that is what God, the Father of us both wants." (Quoted in *Becoming Human* by Jean Vanier, 160-161) This was a man who was grateful 10 out of 10 times. He was thankful for everything in life, including his executioner! Like Jesus on the cross, he forgave the person who took his life and even befriended him in his heart and hoped they would meet again 'as two blessed and good thieves' in paradise. Christian inspires me to be more grateful.

Like the one healed leper, we should constantly be returning to Jesus to thank God for everything.

What is the percentage of my life in which I am grateful?

Being grateful does not mean naively pretending that everything is OK and acceptable. Rather, it means that we can see through everything, the good and the bad, and still believe that life itself is a gift that none of us earned, merited, or deserved. Because life itself is a gift, may we be grateful 10 out of 10 times.