

Homily for 13th Sunday after Pentecost
Luke 17, 11-19.
August 30, 2020
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“Our blessed Lord worked miracles never for Himself, but as credentials for His person. They were manifest signs that he had a special mission for the realization of God’s work among man.” We may see, up to our days, that God works miracles and signs among us up to this very day as a sign that He has a special mission for each one of us, for his people, for the nations and for the entire world. Nothing skips his providence, for only He knows how to bring good from the present evil. I love a lot the expression of the Venerable Fulton Sheen saying: “The celestial clock is different from ours”. The present evil will be converted in the greatest good in the life of those who wait in patience for the Lord’s help and know to thank him as did a leper from today’s Gospel who, after being cured, came back to the foot of Jesus thanking Him.

Venerable Moons. Fulton Sheen in his book *Life of Christ* has an interesting chapter called: “The mightiest Arrow in the Divine quiver”. What is the mightiest arrow in God’s quiver? Before coming to consider the answer on this question, let’s consider the places where Jesus went in today’s Gospel: He went to the regions of Samaria and Galilee – the Galilee of the Gentiles (Assyria conquered this region 700 years ago). We find those lepers in the place and in the midst of the people that was despised by the Jews, “for Jews has nothing to do with the Samaritans”. Despite of all these, Jesus chooses to go that way. The most impressive probably was the fact that the person who was less expected to come back and thank him was that stranger, the Samaritan. That’s why it is said that in heaven we’ll meet people whom we were expecting less to see there.

Christ performed in the life of that Samaritan twofold miracle. It was not a miracle of the healing of his body only, but of the heart as well. It is what was lacking in the other nine lepers. There were the receptors of the mercy of God and yet, they were unwilling to open up their hearts, so that he may heal them.

We know “*that miracles and signs are no cure for unbelief. Some would not believe though one were to rise daily from the dead, because of their unwellness ... and even though the miracles were admitted (as in the case of the healing of those ten lepers), the person Who worked them was denied*”. That was the case of Christ who was rejected after all the miracles he performed. Yet, in this Gospel we do not talk about rejection, but about simple thankfulness.

Continues Fulton Sheen: “*But even though they did not believe in Him, as Isaiah foretold, He had one arrow left in His quiver, which would convince men that he was their Savior. “If only*

I am lifted up from the earth, I will attract all men to myself". The arrow was the self-sacrificial love of God and this love of God was made visible in a sacrifice.

In this encounter of Jesus and the lepers that today's Gospel presents to us can be found a hidden character of the discipleship and its demands. Jesus often spoke about his sufferings in the Gospel. Now, contemplating this gesture of mercy, he says that his disciples are expected to follow him down this road. Where he goes, his disciples must also go. Jesus came into this world to give his life for his disciples... will they be willing to surrender their lives for him? Will they be willing listen to His voice?

So, our Lord calls us to follow him daily by carrying out our cross. He is calling us to holiness in our daily life. Yet, the question still remains: Why are so many people not able to reach holiness? I think sometimes we may have an abstract notion of holiness. In what does holiness consist? Let's consider some quotes of the saints explaining the nature of holiness and in what the holiness does consist.

St. Josemaria Escriva: "*Great' holiness consists in carrying out the 'little duties' of each moment.*" (The Way).

"Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us (...)." Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

"Sanctity consists in struggling, in knowing that we have defects and in heroically trying to overcome them. Sanctity, I insist, consists in overcoming those defects - although we will still have defects when we die; for if not, as I have told you, we would become proud". St. Josemaria Escriva.

We remember the dialogue when St. Paul asked our Lord to be free from the thorn in his body. He writes: "*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong...."*

As a conclusion we have to say: the holy are not those who do not commit sin. Holy are those who after their failure humbly raise up and continue heroically trying to overcome their defects or even go farther on boasting of their weaknesses like St. Paul. He did boast in his weaknesses because he knew this profound truth: the bigger the sinner, the bigger is his right to God's mercy.

Let us ask of our Lord for the grace to not ever give up fighting against our defects, remembering that “Great holiness consists in carrying out the ‘little duties’ of each moment.” (The Way).