

**Lord, Giving thanks to you is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation**

( Lectio Divina of the 28th Sunday - C )

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**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for the blessings you have bestowed on my life. You have provided me with more than I could ever have imagined. You have surrounded me with kind people. You have given me family and friends who bless me every day with kind words and actions. Lord, teach me to offer you a heart of thanksgiving and praise in all my daily experiences of life. Teach me to be joyful always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in all my circumstances.

**First Reading: A reading from book of 2 Kings 5:14-17**

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy. Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant." Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;" and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused. Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."- **The word of the Lord**

**Commentary:** Naaman was the army commander of the King of Aram. He suffered leprosy which was healed by the power of God of Israel. When Naaman wanted to make an offering as an act of gratitude for his healing, prophet Elisha refused to accept Naaman's costly gifts. The grateful Naaman asked the prophet's permission to take two mule-loads of earth with him from Yahweh's land of Israel, so that when he got back to Damascus, he could place an altar for Yahweh on the soil, and so pray to Yahweh on the soil of Israel. Most people at that time had a crude, physical and territorial notion of Divinity. If one wanted to worship the God of Israel in another country, one had to take some of Israel's soil, dump it on the ground in the other country and stand on it. That way, one would "be in Israel," and so could worship Israel's God. The grateful Naaman who had come to Faith in the Lord God through this miracle worked to heal him of leprosy, promised that he would accept Yahweh as his only God and would now offer holocausts to Him alone

**Responsorial Psalm 98**

**R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.

**R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel.

**R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands: break into song; sing praise.

**R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

**Second Reading: A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy 2:8-13**

Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory. This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him he will deny us. If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. **The Word of the Lord.**

**Commentary:** Paul writes this letter to Timothy from prison. Paul was a senior apostle and Timothy was a young missionary. Today's passage is part of Paul's encouragement to Timothy. Paul tells Timothy that he willingly accepts his suffering –“even to the point of chains, like a criminal” – as a grateful Apostle of Jesus, “for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they, too, may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory”. Part of the Christian life-experience includes the physical sufferings and dangers associated with spreading the Word of God. Paul reminds us that, “even if we are unfaithful, God will remain faithful;” and, hence, we must be grateful to God, even in our sufferings.

**Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 17: 11-19**

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

**Reflection:** In the biblical times leprosy was considered to be a contagious disease. Lepers had twofold sufferings. They not only suffered the terrible physical pain in their limbs but also the terrible isolation from the rest of the community. They were forced to live in the tombs, outside of town. They had to ring a little bell and call out "Unclean,

unclean," wherever they walked (Lev 13:15). If a person contracted leprosy, the priests who were responsible for the health of the camp, used to declare him a leper and banish him from his home and the city until their death. If they are cured, they have to go to the priest to be examined and give a thanksgiving offering to God at the temple. That is why Jesus wanted this man to give his story firsthand to the priest to prove that his leprosy was completely gone so that he could be restored to his community. According to Lev 14:3-7 3: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them. If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the defiling disease, and then pronounce them clean. After that, he is to release the live bird in the open fields. Two birds are used. One dies (a guilt bearing sacrifice- Jesus), and one lives (a living sacrifice- we). The leper, like the living bird, goes free.

Today's Gospel speaks of a grateful Samaritan, a non-Jew who returned to thank Jesus for healing his leprosy while the nine Jewish lepers went their way under the false impression that healing was their right as God's chosen people. They did not have an attitude of gratitude to Jesus for the favor they had received. Instead, they hurried off to obtain a health certificate from the priests. Jesus presents the Samaritan as a man of Faith and gratitude. The thanks and praise of the Samaritan was a natural response to the mercy of God. Both the author of 2 Kings and the Evangelist Luke wanted to make an important theological point about outsiders. No story in all the Gospels so poignantly shows man's ingratitude. The lepers came to Jesus with desperate longing, and the merciful Lord cured them. But nine of them never came back to give thanks.

**How to Cultivate Gratitude? And For what?** For cultivating the spirit of gratitude, we need deep humility. We need to understand that everything that we have and everything that we are is God's gift. We need to thank God for our family, our house, the food, the air, the road, the vehicle, the education, job opportunities, the spiritual and civil leaderships and so many other uncountable blessings in our daily life. Let us not take them for Granted. Let us be grateful to God and everyone who enhances our daily life in all the best ways possible. The virtue of gratitude can be expressed in very simple ways. We should always express our gratitude. The phrase "thank you" should be a common part of our daily vocabulary. We usually say grace before meals. But we must say grace before everything that we do and that is how we remain conscious of God's blessings and our right and duty to be grateful to him.

**Ingratitude is an Ugly Sin:** As humans, we could be very unmindful and ungrateful to many people who serve us everyday of our life. Let us take the time to thank the following people for what they are to us in our personal, family, civil and religious life. Great Parents, soulful spouses, dedicated teachers, committed clergy, sacrificial volunteers, kind friends, concerned caregivers, poor housekeepers, smiling servers, selfless police officers, vigilant firefighters, life giving doctors and cheerful nurses and

many other great human beings deserve our gratitude. Birthday celebrations, little expressions of thankfulness and gifts from grateful people should be seen as noble manifestations of gratitude. Gratitude is a great virtue indeed. Despite the ingratitude of humanity, let us continue to be grateful because Gratitude is our heart's memory and our soul's melody.

**Formation of leprosy in soul:** We may not know the pain of the lepers as we don't have experience. We may not even have seen lepers in our neighborhood. But we could easily form leprosy in our mind. For example, when we really dislike to look at someone because of his/her appearance or when we avoid some people's company for some social and ethnical reasons or when we openly exclude some in our social get together or when we go by the color of the skin instead of the content of the character, we develop leprosy in our mind, heart and soul.

**Where is the value of a human person?** We must always remember that the real value of a person is inside, not outside. The person's inside is valuable to God. No person is disgusting for God's touch. In a sense we are all people with leprosy because we have all been deformed by the ugliness of sin. But God, sending down his son Jesus our Lord, has touched us and giving us an opportunity to be healed. And therefore, we need to thank our Lord for wellness and wholeness. It is our bounden duty to pray for doctors, nurses, priests and nuns and other philanthropists who dedicate their life to take care of the lepers.

**Closing Prayer:** Father, I want to lift up my hands and voice to worship You in thanksgiving and praise, for all the goodness and loving-kindness that You so freely pour out on me with every passing day. Thank You for the grace that You supply moment by moment and day by day, and I pray that You would develop in me a true attitude of gratefulness. May I learn to recognize that all the gifts and graces I have is a result of Your loving-kindness towards me, and may I never cease to lift up my hands and voice to You in grateful praise for all You are doing in my life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. (Our Father...Hail Mary...Priestly blessing)