

Scripture Study

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

2 Kings 5:14-17

(Ps 98:1-4)

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Luke 17:11-19

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel reading follows Jesus as he continues his journey toward Jerusalem. On the way he passes between the regions of Galilee and Samaria.
- It was only a short time before that Jesus was refused welcome in a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-56). The Samaritans were historic enemies of the Jews, who considered them pagan foreigners even though many of them had Israelite roots.
- As they travel in this border region, Jesus and his disciples are approached by a mixed group of Samaritan and Jewish lepers. Perhaps their common misery had forced them to band together, since as lepers they were all considered outcasts.
- Excluded from contact with others (Leviticus 13:45-46, 49; Numbers 5:2-3), lepers could return to society only after being made physically and ritually clean (Leviticus 14:2-9). After they beseech Jesus, he tells them what to do to be healed.
- They all obey and are all healed, but only one of them after realizing it, returns to Jesus. Who (or what) he is and why he returns turns out to be very significant.

Questions:

- Read the verses prior to the First Reading (2 Kings 5:1-13). What is Naaman's reaction to Elisha's relayed instructions? Why do you think he reacted this way? What argument did his servant use to change his mind? What is our reaction to God's commands that do not seem to make any sense to us? What should our attitude and response be?
- Consider the qualities of spiritual patience. Of persistence. Of steadfastness. Of faithfulness. How are these qualities active in the Second Reading? What is their reward?
- What would healing mean for a leper in biblical times? In what ways does the Gospel story of the 10 lepers relate to the story of Naaman in our first reading?
- What is the significance of the one leper being a Samaritan (verse 16)? From what did his faith save him (verse 19)? For what did it save him? What might the healing indicate at a deeper level?
- What do you think happened to the other 9 lepers after they were cleansed and went to show themselves to the priests, as Jesus told them to (verse 14)?
- When your prayer is answered, do you act like the one leper who returned to give thanks, or the other nine who did not? How do you express your gratitude to God?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2616, 1503—05, 2096—97

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

Christ, like a skillful physician, understands the weakness of men. He loves to teach the ignorant, and the erring he turns again to his own true way. He is easily found by those who live by faith, and to those of pure eye and holy heart who desire to knock at the door, he opens immediately.

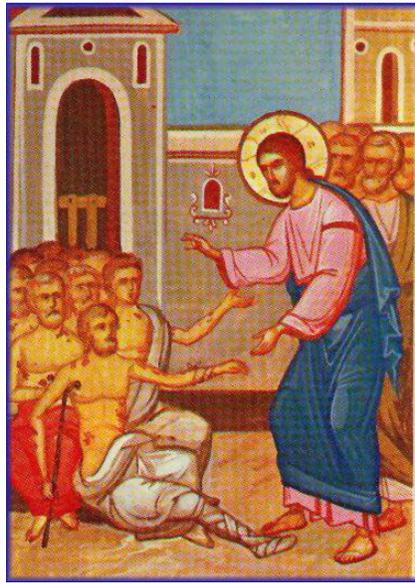
-St. Hippolytus

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us"

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Sama'ria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Meditation: What can adversity teach us about the healing power of love and mercy? Proverbs gives us a hint: *A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity* (Prov. 17:17). When adversity strikes you find out who truly is your brother, sister, and friend. The gospel records an unusual encounter between individuals who belonged to groups which had been divided and hostile towards one another for centuries. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as heretics worse than pagans. And as a result they had no dealings with each another. They were openly hostile whenever their paths crossed. In this gospel narrative we see one rare exception -- a Samaritan leper in company with nine Jewish lepers. Sometimes adversity forces us to drop our barriers or to forget



our prejudices. When this band of lepers saw Jesus they made a bold request. They didn't ask for healing, but instead asked for mercy.

The word *mercy* literally means "*sorrowful at heart*". But mercy is more than just compassion, or heartfelt sorrow at another's misfortune. While compassion empathizes with the sufferer, mercy goes further. It removes suffering. A merciful person shares in another's misfortune and suffering as if it were his own. And he will do everything in his power to dispel that misery. Mercy is also connected with justice. Thomas Aquinas said that mercy "*does not destroy justice, but is a certain kind of fulfillment of justice. ..Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; (and) justice without mercy is cruelty.*" Pardon without repentance negates justice. So what is the significance of these ten lepers asking for mercy? They know they are in need of healing, not just physical, but spiritual healing as well. They approach Jesus with contrition and

faith because they believe that he can release the burden of guilt and suffering and make restoration of body and soul possible. Their request for mercy is both a plea for pardon and release from suffering. Jesus gives mercy to all who ask with faith and contrition.

Why did only one leper out of ten—a Samaritan whom the Jews despised as a people worse than pagans — return to show gratitude? Gratefulness is related to *grace* — a word which means *the release of loveliness*. Gratitude is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God. If we do not recognize and appreciate the mercy shown us we will be ungrateful. Ingratitude is forgetfulness or a poor return for kindness received. Ingratitude easily leads to lack of charity and intolerance towards others as well as to other sins, such as discontent, dissatisfaction, complaining, grumbling, pride and presumption. How often have we been ungrateful to our parents, pastors, teachers, and neighbors? Do you express gratitude to God for his mercy and do you show mercy to your neighbor?

"Lord, may I never fail to recognize your love and mercy. Fill my heart with gratitude and thanksgiving and free me from pride, discontentment, and ingratitude. Help me to count my blessings with gratefulness and to give thanks in all circumstances."

Meditation: (c) 2010 Don Schwager
www.rc.net/wcc/readings/