

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

(2 Kings 5:14-17; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19)

Excerpts from Pope Francis 09 October 2022

by Father Charles Fillion

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Brothers and sisters, there are two features in today's Gospel: *walking together* and *giving thanks*. At the beginning of the story, there is no difference between the Samaritan and the other nine. We only hear that they are lepers, who together, as a group, approach Jesus. Leprosy, as we know, was not **only** a physical affliction, but also a “social disease”, and so lepers had to remain apart from the community (cf. *Lev* 13:46). They could not enter villages; they were kept at a distance, isolated and consigned to the margins of social and even religious life. By *walking together*, these lepers were excluded from society. We should also note that the Samaritan, although considered a heretic, “a foreigner”, is part of their group.

Brothers and sisters, whenever disease and fragility are shared, barriers fall and exclusion is overcome. This image is also meaningful for us: when we are honest with ourselves, we realize that we are all sick at heart, all sinners in need of the Father's mercy. Then we stop creating divisions on the basis of merit, social position or some other superficial criterion; our interior barriers and prejudices likewise fall. In the end, we realize once more that we are brothers and sisters. Even Naaman the Syrian, as the first reading reminded us, for all his wealth and power, could only be healed by doing something simple: wash in the river in which everyone else was bathing. First of all, he had to remove his armour and his robes (cf. *2 Kings* 5). We would do well to set aside our own outer armour, our defensive barriers, and take a good bath of humility, mindful that all of us are vulnerable within and in need of healing.

All of us are brothers and sisters. The Christian faith always asks us to walk alongside others. Faith always urges us to move beyond ourselves and towards God and our brothers and sisters, never to remain enclosed within ourselves. Faith invites us to acknowledge constantly that we are in need of healing and forgiveness, and to share in the frailty of those who are near to us, without feeling ourselves superior. Brothers and sisters, to *walk together* is also the vocation of the Church. Are we capable of *walking together* with others, listening to them, resisting to think only of our own needs?

Our second feature is *giving thanks*. In the group of the ten lepers, there was only one who, realizing that he was cured, turned back to praise God and to show gratitude to Jesus. The other nine were healed, but then went their own way, forgetting the one who had healed them. They forgot the graces given to them by God. The Samaritan, on the other hand, makes the gift he received the first step of a new journey: he returns to the one who healed him. He goes back to Jesus in order to know him better; he enters into a relationship with the Lord. His grateful attitude is not a mere act of courtesy, but the start of a journey of thanksgiving: he falls at Jesus' feet (cf. *Lk* 17:16) and worships him.

He recognizes that Jesus is the Lord, that Jesus is more important than the healing he received. This is a great lesson also for us, who daily benefit from the gifts of God, yet so often go our own way, failing to cultivate a living and real relationship with him. Many people take everything for granted, including faith, including our relationship with God, to the point where we can no longer be amazed or to give thanks, lacking in gratitude and incapable of seeing the wonders of the Lord. We end up thinking that all the gifts we receive each day are natural and due to us.

Gratitude, the ability to give thanks, makes us **appreciate** the presence in our lives of the God who is love and to recognize the importance of others, overcoming the indifference that disfigure our hearts. It is essential to know how to say “thank you”. To thank the Lord each day and to thank one another. In our families, for the little gifts we receive daily and so often do not even think about. In the places we spend our days, for the many services which we enjoy and for all those people who support us. In our Christian communities, for the love of God that we experience in our brothers and sisters who, often silently, pray, sacrifice, suffer and journey with us.

So please, let us not forget to say these key words: thank you! Let us pray that the Saints, our brothers and sisters, may help us to *walk together*, without walls of division; and to cultivate that nobility of soul, so pleasing to God, which is gratitude.

The term “Eucharist” itself comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning “thanksgiving”. So may this Eucharist help us to always be thankful every day, to walk together in faith with our brothers and sisters, and always be thankful for what God has done for us, and will continue to do for us.