

GOSPEL

LUKE 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, ten lepers came to meet him. They stood some way off and called to him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. This made Jesus say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT

This Sunday's Gospel presents Jesus healing 10 lepers, of whom only one, a Samaritan and therefore a foreigner, returned to thank him. The Lord said to him: "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well". This Gospel passage invites us to a twofold reflection. It first evokes two levels of healing: one, more superficial, concerns the body. The other deeper level touches the innermost depths of the person, what the Bible calls "the heart", and from there spreads to the whole of a person's life. Complete and radical healing is "salvation". By making a distinction between "health" and "salvation", even ordinary language helps us to understand that salvation is far more than health: indeed, it is new, full and definitive life.

Furthermore, Jesus here, as in other circumstances, says the words: "Your faith has made you whole". It is faith that saves human beings, re-establishing them in their profound relationship with God, themselves and others; and faith is expressed in gratitude. Those who, like the healed Samaritan, know how to say "thank you", show that they do not consider everything as their due but as a gift that comes ultimately from God, even when it arrives through men and women or through nature. Faith thus entails the opening of the person to the Lord's grace; it means recognizing that everything is a gift, everything is grace. What a treasure is hidden in two small words: "thank you"!

Jesus healed 10 people sick with leprosy, a disease in those times considered a "contagious impurity" that required ritual cleansing (cf. Lv 14: 1-37). Indeed, the «leprosy» that truly disfigures the human being and society is sin; it is pride and selfishness that spawn indifference, hatred and violence in the human soul. No one, save God who is Love, can heal this leprosy of the spirit which scars the face of humanity. By opening his heart to God, the person who converts is inwardly healed from evil.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How might you sometimes fall into the trap of lacking gratitude when prayers are answered, or grace is poured out on your circumstances?
2. How is your faith, your reliance on God, saving you in your day to day life? How might you build a more expectant faith and grateful heart?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.