

Friday of the Ninth Week of Ordinary Time / Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!

(Tb 11:5-17; Mk 12:35-37) In times past, farmers tilled and planted, but the rain was beyond their control. When it came to water, our ancestors were at the mercy of God's providence. Modern innovations have given us much more control over our own destiny, but divine providence will never be completely factored out of life's equation. We've all been in seemingly impossible situations that worked out well after all. It might be something as mundane as finding a spot in a full parking lot, passing an impossible exam or arriving somewhere just in the nick of time. Circumstances were beyond our control, yet things worked out anyway. Things that work out well far outnumber things that fail – especially when we include in our calculations something as crucial as the breath we are about to take. Without it, we'd turn red and start flailing about. Every single breath we take saves us all that agony and embarrassment. We needn't wait until we develop asthma to appreciate each breath, nor must we become blind to appreciate our sight, nor need we narrowly escape death to appreciate life. We have every reason here and now to be grateful to God, yet we can so fixate on what goes wrong in life that we completely overlook the countless blessings we all receive in every moment of every day.

In the Book of Tobit, Tobit himself and Sarah, his future daughter-in-law, come to share this much in common: on a certain day, they each found life so unbearable that they wanted to die. However, in today's installment of the story, their individual tragedies have both turned into blessings: Sarah has her husband and Tobit's eyesight is restored. This happy event occasioned his prayer of thanksgiving. Let's listen again to part of it: "Blessed be God, and praised be his great name, and blessed be all his holy angels. May his holy name be praised throughout all the ages. Because it was he who scourged me, and it is he who has had mercy on me." Although we can never thank God enough that we see each other in the light of day, we should be immeasurably more grateful for the light of faith wherein we see God Himself, one in three. But faith not only penetrates Heaven, it also affords us eternal life hereafter – the one supreme reason for being grateful that immeasurably surpasses all the other reasons combined.

When it comes to gratitude, however, we mustn't overlook any reason for giving thanks – no matter how small it may be. Indeed, the smaller it is the better, in keeping with our Lord's observation: "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones." (Lk16:10a) We'll never truly be thankful for our greatest blessing, heaven hereafter, until we've learned never to overlook even the most mundane reasons for giving thanks here below. So thank God for your spot in a full parking lot. But be no less thankful for your spot in an empty lot. Without it, you'd have to feed the parking meter your small change. Now we've discovered one more reason to thank God for our car: without it, we couldn't take advantage of our free spot in the church parking lot. Turn gratitude into a game! Don't worry about not seeing the forest for the trees! Gratitude is a bit of a paradox. For a panorama, you normally zoom out until you're no longer focused on a few individual trees, but where gratitude is concerned, the big picture is obtained by zooming in on the leaves! After we've learned to give thanks even for the micro blessings we've received, only one thing remains. In order to hit the jackpot in the game of gratitude, we must also thank God for the greatest crosses that we suffer, since God's choicest graces come to us in this disguise. Only then will we enjoy a happiness that no one can take from us. May the joy of gratitude be the spice of our life and a fitting prelude to life everlasting! Amen!