

(Food for thought)

Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19.

The Other Nine



We have read the story of the Ten Lepers so often throughout our lives that we sometimes take the point of the story for granted. We often focus on the thankfulness of the one leper, in contrast to the nine others who did not return to "give glory to God." It is much easier to condemn the nine rather than understand them. Jesus knew about the ten and where they were and where they went and why they were and who they were, and he healed all of them just the same.

Ten lepers called out to Jesus that day. Ten obediently kept their distance, living their own identity. Ten were invited to return to life. Ten were made clean and were healed. Ten were cured - not just physically - but now becoming socially acceptable again. Ten were restored to the community amid the challenging, even troubling teaching of Jesus - teaching about the

life of faith, the call to discipleship and living in response to that call.

But only one - when he saw that he was healed - returned, threw himself at the feet of Jesus and said thanks. Only one turned back. And he was a Samaritan. He was an outcast even among the lepers - a leper of the lepers. But he was the only one who turned back and gave thanks. He knew Jesus by name, but they all knew. He begged for mercy, but they all begged. He was healed, but they were all healed. And Jesus asks: "where are the other nine?"

In each of our lives there are moments when we are confronted by the difficult challenges of trying to live our faith, and of trying to understand what it means to witness to the kingdom of God in our lives; when everything around us tells us to keep moving along with the other nine. These are moments when we can be tempted to do just enough to satisfy what's expected of us. These are moments when we are

too preoccupied celebrating our own lives to think of anything - or anyone - else.

But these are also the moments when we, too, have the opportunity to stop and turn back, to find ourselves at the feet of the Lord, in thanksgiving and praise, offering ourselves as disciples and witnesses.

