

8TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)
GIVE THANKS TO GOD IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

When Naaman the Syrian, was cleansed of his leprosy, he went back to Elisha to offer him gifts as a sign of gratitude to him. He also acknowledged the power of the God of Israel, and believed in Him.

We heard in the gospel that after the ten lepers had been cleansed, one of them returned to give thanks to Jesus. He was also a foreigner like Naaman, not a Jew. The other nine were Jews.

Lepers at that time were ostracized, and they rang a bell when passing and shouting 'unclean', to alert people that they were around and people would move away from them. So when the ten were healed, it was like being restored back to the community and enjoying their dignity as human beings.

Sin is a spiritual leprosy which takes us away from God. Jesus came to cleanse us from this spiritual disease. To be totally made whole and live with Him, we have to die with Him, as St. Paul told Timothy. When we come to Mass, we offer sacrifice in thanksgiving to God. The word 'Eucharist' means 'Thanksgiving'. We give thanks to God for sending us His Son to die for us. We make alive the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. 'By His wounds we are healed'. That is why it is important to be at Mass every day.

Does God need our thanksgiving? Yes and no. Yes, because He has done and continues to do many things for us. No, because 'our thanksgiving adds nothing to His greatness, but makes us grow in grace, and profit us for salvation'.

The Psalmist encouraged the Jews to give thanks to God always because He is good; (Pss.106:1; 118:1; 136:1). Jesus Himself very often gave thanks to His Father, and sometimes even before He worked miracles. He gave thanks to God before breaking the bread to feed the five thousand, (Jn.6:11). When the seventy-two disciples returned from their mission, He praised and thanked God; (Lk.10:21). He did the same at the Last Supper; (Mk.14:22-23).

St Paul also began most of his letters by giving thanks to God for the people, and what God had done in his own life: "First I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is talked of all over the world," (Rom.1:8); Others are 1Cor.1:4; Phil.1:3; 1Thess.1:2.

Unfortunately, many of us fail to thank God always. St. Ignatius of Loyola said that one of the serious sins we commit is the sin of ingratitude. When we miss Mass, we only think about breaking the law. We do not know that we are failing to give thanks to God. God created us in His own image and likeness, but we are the most ungrateful of all His creatures. I think we give Him more troubles than the other creatures. Maybe due to the free will He has given us.

There is the need to thank Him always, because everything we have and enjoy comes from Him: air, water, plants and animals, our strength, wisdom, and most especially, "When we were still helpless, at the appointed time, Christ died for the godless (us)", (Rom.5:6).

The readings remind us also that, we have to show gratitude to all those who help us every day; even to thank those who make life difficult for us, because their actions may turn out to be positive experiences later. Do you thank your spouses for what they do for you? What about children to their parents and vice versa? Do we thank our workers, and do workers thank their employers? What about those who serve us voluntarily, and friends?

God is always faithful, as we heard in the second reading, and will continue to serve us even if we are not grateful and faithful to Him. One secret is that prayer of praise and thanksgiving is more powerful than prayer of petition, because they are expressions of strong faith in God. So thank God in the morning, afternoon, and evening; when you eat and drink, dress, play, work, rest, are sick or well, succeed or fail. "Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," (1Thess.5:17-18).