

0160 28th Sunday of the Year C

A Grateful Heart

Some time ago, I met a person who said to me, 'Father, I'm a Catholic, but I stopped going to Mass because I felt I wasn't getting anything out of it.'

Now personally I believe there is so much that we get out of going to Mass. Most importantly we receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion. And often in the prayers and Scripture readings, in the hymns, and perhaps even in the sermon, we will hear some words that console us and give us light and courage for our journey. And hopefully at Mass we also experience some sense of community – of being with people who share our faith and care about us and support us – perhaps most especially when we offer each other the sign of peace.

So there is much we can get out of going to Mass. But it's very important for us to appreciate that we don't come to Mass only to get something, but also to give something, namely our praise and worship to God, and to thank God for all the blessings we have received in our life.

One of the ten lepers who was healed in today's Gospel praised God, and he went back to Jesus and knelt down before him and thanked him for the healing he had received. His actions imitate what we do at Mass. We offer our praise to God, we humbly bow down and adore God, and we give our thanks to God for all of the blessings and healings that we have received in our lives.

Certainly, the life of each one of us has its troubles, and in some cases very serious troubles, but we are also blessed in many ways – most especially with the gift of life, and with the gifts of hope and love and courage, with people who care about us, with intelligence and understanding, and so on. We are all so richly blessed. No matter how many difficulties we face each week, we can all – if we take to time to think about it – find reasons to praise and thank God. You might like to think now about one reason you have for thanking God at this moment. Quietly, express your thanks now: 'I thank you dear Lord for ...'

Of course, it is not God who needs our thanks but we who need to say, 'thank you.' We all need to cultivate a grateful heart. A deep feeling of gratefulness is very important for our mental health and our physical well-being, and for a productive life.

We need to express our gratefulness to God, and also to express our gratefulness to one another. While Jesus, in his divinity, did not need the thanks of the ten lepers who were healed in today's Gospel, Jesus, in his humanity, was grateful to the tenth leper who returned to thank him, and he was saddened by the nine who did not.

So today I invite each one of you, before the sun sets, to thank someone for who they are for you in your life. If it is not someone you live with, give them a phone call, or perhaps send them a text or an email, or even visit personally if that is possible. Or buy a thank you card and post it to them. They will appreciate it so much, and you too will feel better having nourished the seed of gratefulness in your own heart.

Fr Michael Goonan SSP