

Homily for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 Year C

Today's Gospel paints a very human picture of Christ. He wants and He needs to be thanked.

All 10 lepers were healed because of their faith, but only one had the good manners to turn back and thank Christ, and it seems to have made a deep impression upon Him.

Now a little reflection will show that the point of this Gospel story is not just the importance of good manners, but that it is something much deeper than that.

Today's Gospel reminds us of an important aspect of our being, that we often tend to forget. We are creatures, created beings, conceived, brought into being and sustained eternally by the loving will of a creator God.

All that we are, all that we have and all that we ever can be is pure gift. All is given to us, and the appropriate response of a creature to our Creator should be one of loving gratitude.

Gratitude and thankfulness are part of what it means to be human.

If we are not constantly aware of our need to give thanks, and if gratitude is not part of our prayer to God, then we are impoverished, and only part of what it is to be human. Gratitude and thanksgiving is the breath of our conversation with God.

It is no accident that the highest act of communication between man and God is the Eucharist, from the Greek, meaning "thanksgiving".

The Mass, and in it the Eucharist, is one extended act of prayerful thanks.

We express it in the Offertory prayer

"Blessed.....through your goodness.....blessed be God forever".

And the prayer before the Preface

Let us give thanks.....it is right to give.....

Listen to the prayers throughout the mass, they are shot through with thanksgiving and gratitude. The last words of the Mass are also words of thanks, "Thanks be to God".

In the Eucharist we are at almost creatureliness, when our hearts are caught up in loving gratitude to God, for the gift of Christ his Son.

The greatest mistake that can befall man is that he loses sight of this creatureliness, and fails to remember he is not creator, but rather is privileged to be a co-worker with God in the unfolding of the secrets and the wonders of Creation.

The result of the uncovering of the marvels of science should not lead man to the illusion that he is master of his own universe and the consequent loss of loving gratitude to a Creator God.

Each new discovery should expose a little more of the wonder and majesty of this Creator God, and a profound sense of the sheer giftedness of all of Creation. Thanks is not just a matter of words, it is a matter of life and living life.

Look at our gifts.

We have the gift of life.

Loving gratitude to God should entail respect and reverence for all forms of life. We should never wilfully destroy it. We should protect and nourish its growth whenever and wherever we can.

We have the gift of health.

Loving gratitude to God for this gift of physical and mental well-being means living in such a way that we do not abuse, harm, or destroy this fragile gift in ourselves or in others.

We have the gift of nature.

Loving gratitude to God for this immense gift of the vast environment that sustains and enriches life means husbanding its resources and refraining from pollution.

We have the gift of companionship, community, and other people.

Loving gratitude to God for this gift entails inculcating in ourselves the spirit of care and concern for the health, happiness, and wellbeing of others, especially the more vulnerable. Taking the time and effort to educate ourselves to understand the vast difference of personality and beliefs that enrich the human race.

In a more mysterious way, we have the gifts of ageing, ill health and death itself.

How on earth are these things gifts, you may well ask? Why on earth should I thank God for them?

Just as life itself is a wonderful gift, so too the awareness of the limitation of life, be it through ill health, ageing and death in ourselves or in others around us is also a gift. We need to be aware that no matter how wonderful it all is, it is nonetheless limited, it must decline, it must come to an end, and it adds an urgency and intense value to the present moment and all it contains.

Much of our lives and our good health, our youth, and our middle years, are taken for granted and slip by so very quickly without us consciously using them to their full potential.

If we open our eyes to the signs of the limitation of life around us, we can always give loving gratitude to God for the gift of our life and health by living it to the full.

The most marvellous gift of all is the promise of Eternal life. Loving gratitude to God means living our lives in such a way that we can inherit and take possession of what is ours for all eternity.

A gift is something that is given as a token of love and affection. It should evoke feelings of love and gratitude in the one who receives it, and this in turn the delights and consoles the one who gives the gift.

And so it is with us. All of life and creation is a gift, an expression of God's love for us, the summit of which is the Eucharist itself, when in loving thankfulness we receive the gift of God himself.

Gratitude is the fundamental debt of creature towards Creator, and just as it does in the Eucharist, so too will its sentiment re-echo in our hearts for all eternity, "Thanks be to God".