

Twenty Eighth Sunday In Ordinary Time, October 12, 2025

In 2015, when Bishop Daly just arrived here in the Diocese of Spokane, one of the first things he wanted to do was to appoint a new rector at Bishop White Seminary in Spokane, and he asked all of the priests of the Diocese to make recommendations to him who might be a good fit for that position. And I prayed on it, and I wrote to the Bishop saying that I wanted to do it. Not that I was just dying to have that position or anything like that but there was definitely a part of me that wanted it. And I don't remember how exactly I prayed in those days, but I was probably asking God to make it happen. And it didn't happen. I'm sure I was disappointed about it at the time. I don't remember sulking in my prayer, but I might have. I've done that. We've all done that. Anyway, a few years down the road from then it became abundantly clear to me that it would have been a terrible mistake to put me in that spot. And so, I prayed and thanked God that the answer to my prayers was “no.”

And if you have had that experience, too, you ask God for something, you think it's the right thing, and the answer is “no.” You're disappointed, but then later on down the road, you realize God knew what He was doing. Too often in our prayers, especially when we are petitioning God for something the matter that is of most important to us is whether or not we get that thing we were asking for. And then if we don't receive what we're asking for, we don't see any reason to be thankful. I don't remember ever thanking God at the time when the answer given was “no” to what I was asking for.

But is the granting of our petition really the only reason to be thankful? It seems like an approach to prayer and relationship with God that is lacking in maturity if we're only thankful when God gives us what we want. We want to be thankful that God Almighty, the

Lord of the universe, loves and cares enough about, to receive our prayer, to hear our prayers, listen to our prayers and to answer them whether the answer is “Yes”, or “Not yet”, or “No, I have a better plan”.

The first reading in the Gospel today seemed to present to us two situations where people get what they want. Naaman in the first reading, follows the instructions of the prophet Elisha, plunges in the Jordan seven times, and he is cleansed of his leprosy, and he gives thanks. And then, of course, the well-known story of the ten lepers crying out to Jesus for healing. They receive healing on their way to the priests and just one comes back with gratitude. These and maybe other passages in the Scriptures may lead us to think that if we just do it fine, we would get the things that we're asking for every time. But the reality is, God is always working for our the good, no matter what the answers to our prayers might be. God is always working for our good, and not for our destruction.

You may know the story of Blessed Solanas Casey; he was a Capuchin Franciscan in the 20th century. I think he spent most of his life in Detroit and there are many interesting things about Solanas Casey. One of the things that he used to say was, “Thank God ahead of time.” Thank God ahead of time. And I don't think that that was just some little quirky think like, "Oh, if you say a prayer, and then add a little thanks to it, and you will get what you wanted.” God does not come to be manipulated in such a way. But he probably realized that we should be thankful to God, no matter what the answer to our prayers is. Be thankful that God does hear us and the answer us knowing that God is always working for our good.

It makes me think again of my niece, Aleana. I know I have shared about her before. When she was about age ten, she had a cancer,

very serious cancer, a rare cancer and of course we prayed and prayed and prayed. We begged God to heal her, and she died. So, to look back on that and to just suggest that we should have been thankful to God instead of being disappointed seems like a little insensitive or crass or does not quite seem right. I am still trying to process through that even after all those years. But, even in the situation like that, families are invited to trust in God. That God always acts for our good and He does answer our prayers in ways that sometimes don't make sense to us. But in the end, it turns out that He was acting for our good. It is hard to accept.

In both the first reading and the Gospel, the Word tells us that there is a higher value than just the healing that is granted. There's a higher value and that is faith and the relationship with God. At the end of the account in Luke's Gospel, Jesus says to the ex-leper, *"Your faith has saved you."* Your faith has saved you. Interesting, how when these lepers approached Jesus, they had faith that He would heal them and Jesus doesn't say, "Be healed." He does not lay His hands on them and heal them in that moment. He tells them, *"Go show yourselves to the priests."* Going and showing yourself to the priests would be the action that taken by someone who has been cleansed. So, if they were cleansed, they would go to the priests who declares them clean and therefore fit for entrance into worship. But these ten, without even being cleansed yet, follow Jesus' instruction to go show themselves to the priest. So, they step out in faith; they have faith, and that's the moral to the story.

It's about faith. It's about having faith in God, trusting in God and in this particular case, yes, they are cleansed. What is most important is that they have an experience of God's goodness and they grow in their faith and love of God. Likewise, in the story of Naaman, you might think that the most important verse in that passage is, *"His*

flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy.” But the most important verse in this passage is where Naaman says, *“I will no longer offer holocaust for a sacrifice to any other God, except the Lord.”* He comes to believe in the true and living God. That is what the scene is all about. That is what this passage is about.

I pray that all of us have the grace in our prayers when we are asking God for graces, blessings, asking God for particular things, that we would be grateful, that we would thank God ahead of time simply for hearing us and answering our prayers – whatever the answer might be. And that we would realize that whatever the answer is, it is meant to lead us not farther from God, but closer, always closer.