

28th Week of Ordinary Time 2025

Kings 5:14-17; Ps 97; Tim 2:8-13; Luke 17: 11-19

Gratitude is important. Ungrateful people are a bore. We do not enjoy their company, and we do not want to do anything for them. Grateful people make us happy, and open up our heart to them. It is not surprising that the sacrifice of the Mass is known from the earliest of times as the 'Eucharist', which is the Greek word for Thanksgiving. It opens up our lives in gratitude to God.

The Old Testament reading from 2nd book of Kings is - among other things - a story of gratitude. Naaman is a powerful officer in the King of Assyria's army who has a skin disease. Being Assyrian he believes in the many gods of his religion. These gods would be geographically based, around towns, rivers, woods and the whole nation. I think it logical to assume that he tried all these gods and nothing worked, and so he listens to a Hebrew slave and seeks out the prophet Elisha to see if he can work a cure. The cure is that Naaman dip himself 7 times into the Jordan River. He is cured, and his flesh we are told restored '*like the flesh of a little child*'. Naaman wants to thank Elisha with riches, but he will not take anything, so Naaman asks for 'two mule-loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burn offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD.'

Why does Naaman wish the two mule loads of earth? Because his religion connects the gods with location, and in his mind the LORD¹ of Israel should be no different, so he takes a bit of Israel away with him so that God should be near him when he offers sacrifice to Him. And this is acceptable

¹ The Holy name.

to the LORD, our God, because Naaman has a grateful heart even though He is not Jewish. God accepts those who turn to him in gratitude.

The Second reading, from Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy is also about gratitude. No, it does not use the word. But starts with '*Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead*'. Why is Jesus risen from the dead? Because He is life, and He wishes to share Himself with us. For this we should be grateful, we should be grateful because God, as Paul reminds Timothy, has remembered us and loved us.

And of course, the Gospel is about gratitude. 10 men have a disease of the skin. Not only does this mean that they are uncomfortable, it means that they are 'unclean' and that they cannot go into synagogue. When Jesus heals them he is not only physically cleansing them of their infirmity but by sending them to the priests to look at them and declare them free from leprosy, he is allowing them to be reintegrated into the communities to which they belong.² He is making them whole, individually and socially.

All 10 are healed, all, we presume go back into society, and – as it were – to church. But only one has truly reintegrated himself back with God. By recognising what Jesus has done for him and turning back, retracing his steps, he seeks Jesus in gratitude. It is a movement of love encountered.

We should do the same. We should seek Jesus in gratitude. What is someone should ask you 'why?' Why do you seek Jesus in gratitude? Has he granted you your prayers? Have you been healed from your illness? Are

² See chapter 14 or Exodus for laws concerning the cleansing of Lepers.

28th Week of Ordinary Time 2025

you not still suffering from cronic pain? Is not your son or daughter still terribly ill? Is you loved one not still slipping into the early but unmissable stages of dementia? What grief lingers in your heart? Is there not war and starvation and drugs and human trafficking and sexual abuse and betrayal rampant in the world, which seems so often to be fraying apart at the seams? In this world, how do you respond when they ask you what miracle of Jesus is the source of your gratitude?

You pull out your rosary and pool the beads in your hand. You pull out the cross and say: *"This is what he has done for me. He has died for me, and he has risen so that I might live with Him. He has shared this with me in my Baptism. He shares with me His own Body and Blood at Mass. He shares His life daily with me as he walks with me and speaks to me. For this I am grateful. What else do I need to ask for? What else do I need? He has done this for you, too."* Everything is enough.

The entire world would be an utterly different place if we lived life with gratitude. Gratitude to parents, family, country, God. The 10 commandments would not be broken. The Beatitudes would be lived. The Lords' Prayer would never be far from our lips. I would not be endlessly dissatisfied with myself and with others. I would be less angry and less grasping. I would be more Hope filled.

Make gratitude to the centre of your life. Then we will not be bores and we will enjoy Jesus' company more.