

I am not a fan of traffic.

I find myself getting angry dealing with traffic.

Traffic brings out our **worst assumptions** of others.

This is apparent when lanes are merging.

I think the problem, for me, began with **tinted windows**.

Now that I can't see the driver in front of me,

it's hard to tell

if they are giving me a thank you wave

when I let them merge or not.

I'm a **big fan of the thank you wave.**

Once in a while,

someone actually rolls down their window

and **sticks out their hand**

to wave "Thank you" for letting them in.

When this happens,

I feel an almost **irrational wave of good will for the driver** in front of me.

It is such a relatively small thing, but it makes my day.

That rarely happens, though.

Have you noticed that?

I want to believe that people are waving thank you
and I just can't see it through their heavily tinted windows,
but **I'm not so sure.**

In this weeks gospel,
I wonder if Jesus experienced some of the **same frustration?**
Luke tells the story of 10 lepers healed by Jesus.
Yet, only one thanks him.
"Were not ten made clean,?" Jesus asks the one who returned.
"But the other nine, where are they?"

Luke has a **soft place for outsiders** in his gospel.
Being a Gentile, himself an outsider,
Luke highlights the roles of **those on the fringes**

Who played an important role in revealing God's Kingdom to the world (Women, children, sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans, and lepers).

From the passages of the last few weeks,
we know where Jesus is headed, **to Jerusalem,**
towards the cross.

On his way, we find Jesus and the disciples
traveling between the **borders of Samaria and Galilee.**

We all know ancient Jews hated the Samaritans.

Samaritans were considered half breeds,
not fully Jewish and not quite Gentile.

These were people who had intermarried with other groups,

like the Jews who settled down in Babylon after the exile.

(From OT lesson).

In his gospel, Luke uses words like, “Sinners,” “tax collectors,” and, most of all, “Samaritans” to describe the people you don’t associate with, **the outcasts of society.**

It is here, In this **no man’s land,**

That Jesus encountered 10 lepers.

Leprosy was the **scourge of the ancient world.**

There was no cure.

The disease left a person grossly disfigured.

Fingers and toes rotted away.

Nasal cavities decomposed.

Leprosy eventually affected the legs and feet

And **the skin fell away from the body.**

People suffering from leprosy were **quarantined to the extreme,**

sent away from family and the community

to **remote, deserted places like caves.**

Lepers were the **outcast of outcasts.**

Lepers in the time of Jesus were required to shout out,

“Unclean! Unclean!”if anybody got too close.

And if, by a slim chance, they were **healed from leprosy,**

Deuteronomy chapter 13 details

they are to present themselves to **the priests for inspection.**

It is only after the **priest is satisfied** that the leper is made
“clean.”

Luke tells this story of Jesus approaching 10 lepers,
probably shouting “Unclean! Unclean!.”

However, when they saw him coming closer,

they, then, shouted “**Jesus, Master,**
(kyrie eleison!) have mercy on us!”

Instead of saying they are healed,

Jesus instructs them, “**Go and show yourselves to the**
priests,”

as prescribed in Deuteronomy chapter 13.

And as they went, they were made clean.

In other words,

while they were going to the priests,

all 10 were healed.

These outcasts, who were **without hope**,

without hope of the future,

have now **received their lives back!**

They could now go back home, to be with friends and to love their families.

Once rejected, once outcasts, they can now rejoin society

.

They are restored to the community.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Do you see the point Luke is making here?

Only one returns to give thanks and it is **the outcast of the outcasts.**

We don't know the nationality of the other nine.

We just know of one.

This one, who was despised because he was a leper,

This one, who was despised because he was a Samaritan;

Is saved by the rescue of Jesus.

He alone came back to thank God.

It was Jesus, not the priests,

who declared the Samaritan leper clean.

This got me **wondering about gratitude.**

I think people have a hard time showing gratitude

because it makes us **feel vulnerable.**

When we thank someone,

We are, essentially, acknowledging that

we couldn't do it by ourselves.

By thanking someone for doing something we could not do for ourselves,

We are admitting our weakness.

In a previous parish,

There was a family who lived on the edge of the county.

They weren't really parishioners,

but the children would occasionally come to Sunday School

and sometimes show up to VBS,

but I never saw the parents in church.

I knew they both worked,

I had met the mother once.

I knew she was holding down a couple of part-time jobs

while keeping up with her children.

I had never met the father.

I knew he was a trucker, on the road a good deal of the time.

So, I was very surprised

to see the whole family

at church that Sunday.

As I greeted everyone after the service,

the father stuck his hand out for me to shake it.

I could see tears welling in his eyes,

his voice choked up as he explained

They were there that Sunday to give thanks to God.

He had been on the road the week before

and had a near collision with another vehicle.

Apparently it had been a very close call.

He said

the only place for his family to be that morning

was at church.

I knew that he was a seasoned truck driver,
who has probably seen his share of accidents,
so for him to be shaken enough
to be there that morning,
it must have been a **very** close call.

This mother,
who worked two part-time jobs,
had sacrificed a Sunday morning
to come to a church full of strangers
to give thanks for her husband's safe return.
Their gratitude was palpable.

That close call had been significant enough
to strip away any reluctance to admit their weakness,
Acknowledge that is God alone who intervened,
And confess their dependence on God for the future.
How many of you know what that feels like?
There, but for the grace of God, go I.

When we are shocked by close calls with tragedy
or danger,
we leave our pretense of self-sufficiency behind
and admit what is always true:
that we are not in control,
we do not have all the answers,

and we need God's help and the help of each other.

Open and acknowledged vulnerability

is what allows us to fully worship God.

Our only response to God's presence is gratitude.

Living in gratitude to God,

Produces faith that heals,

nourishes us,

and makes us whole.

At 8:30,

during the rite 1 service,

We say a prayer just before we receive communion.

It is called the Prayer of Humble Access.

It begins like this:

We do not presume to come to this thy Table,

O merciful Lord,

trusting in our own righteousness,

but in thy manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs

under thy Table.

We open ourselves to the mercy of God because

we are **not** enough.

Not strong enough,

not smart enough,

not rich enough,

not enough to be whole

without the mercy of God.

For this mercy

We give gratitude every Sunday.

Through our gratitude to God,

We are freed from the impossible task of becoming enough,

Free from having to do it all on our own.

We are give our burdens to God

Because we trust in the mercy of God.

I believe those moments

when we give help to another person

and when we show our gratitude to them for the help they give us, those are moments of recognition of God in each of us.

For that precious instant,

We know God and see God in each other.

As we go into the world this week,

Let us joyfully give generously to those in need.

Also, let us receive the help they show us with gratitude.

But let us never forget

that help and the helpers,

are gifts of God for which we are to be forever grateful.