

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Beyond Gratitude to Spiritual Enlightenment Thanksgiving Day Thursday, November 27, 2014 9:00 AM Sir 50:22-24; 1 Cor 1:3-9; **Lk 17:11-19** (When we endure sufferings of any kind: emotional, physical, mental with love and patience, that love and patience is really redemptive, not only for ourselves but for others.)

Ironically on this day in which we read about the **lepers**, I myself am suffering from a very tender and painful rash on my hands, for which reason I will not be giving out Communion or shaking your hands after Mass. What I have, according to the Mayo Clinic, will run its course in about seven days; what the lepers had never ran its course. It was an unknown actually **infectious disease that caused people to be excluded from the community**. So you can imagine their great joy at having been cleansed. And there's no doubt that as they marched off toward Jerusalem following Jesus' instruction to go to the priest, **no doubt they were rejoicing and praising God**. There's no doubt about that.

What Luke shows us is a **very human side of Jesus**, that although they are praising God, doubtlessly thanking God, they didn't come back to thank him. This is a human feeling. **When we do for others, we do want some kind of thanks**. And "Jesus, Son though he was, learned obedience from what he suffered." This is part of his suffering. And he learned from his suffering. What did he learn? Well, one of the things that we all have to learn is that **we cannot do good because we are thanked or in order to get gratitude**. That would be a very bad motivation. Of course it wasn't his motivation, and yet it was tied in through his human emotions. And he expressed it. "Were not ten made clean? Where are the other nine?" Indeed! Well, they were doing what he said. They were going to Jerusalem to the priest to show themselves, and they were again doubtlessly thanking God for this wonderful freedom, liberation from disease.

So we might want to then look at ourselves in regard to those who are sent forth by Christ to continue his work. Since we are all human, **we all have this desire to be thanked**, and yet like Jesus we have to learn that that is not only not a motivation, but the absence of being thanked is no reason not to continue. It is no reason to indulge in a feeling of being cheated out of something that we really deserve. Better not, better offer this together with all of our sufferings and Jesus' suffering to the Father, because **when we endure sufferings of any kind: emotional, physical, mental with love and patience, that love and patience is really**

redemptive, not only for ourselves but for others. For Jesus it was only for others, of course.

So we are capable of really aiding Jesus' work precisely in this way, not necessarily relieving leprosy or some other ailment, although we might. We might through our prayers or through our medical expertise or through our nursing care, **we might in fact literally relieve the sufferings of others** in the physical order, or maybe through our extension of our listening abilities and concern for other people we might lift the burdens of mental or emotional distress, but even if we cannot do that, **by accepting the sufferings that come our way with patience and love, we are contributing to the redemption of the world.**

And when we recognize this, and this is the second point of the story that Luke tells, it is the one who did reflect on what had happened, not simply reacted and responded, which is all very spontaneous and ingenuous and wonderful, childlike, but **the one who reflected on what had happened and by whom it had happened**, that man was lifted up on another level. He wasn't simply physically healthy, physically healed, but he **became spiritually enlightened.** "Go; your faith has saved you." This is more than the first miracle, and actually a far greater one. And it's one that the one man cooperated with, participated in. Indeed **when it comes to our enlightenment in faith, we participate in it in a way we cannot participate in receiving a miracle.**

So there are various lessons here in Luke's beautiful story, **lessons for us** called to follow Jesus the healer, lessons for us fellow sufferers in the vale of tears so to speak, lessons also on how through reflection and acknowledgment of Christ himself as the one sent, we are really and truly enlightened and have a new blessing that raises our lives to a new level that cannot exist without this blessing. So the very great gift of faith and how all of this makes us more aware of God's goodness and that awareness makes us all the more grateful and willing to offer gratitude and thanksgiving, which in turn primes the pump even more, makes us more open to more gifts. So this is about **a process that works step-by-step-by-step to help us open to the infinite goodness and giftedness and giftingness of God.** I just made that word up.

Now whether the original Pilgrims and Puritans who started this feast really had all this in mind, I do not know. But on reflecting on our evangelist Luke, I think he intended that we reflect on this and let it help us grow in a spirit of real Thanksgiving!