

Expressing Gratitude Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time/C October 9, 2016
9:00 AM 2 Kgs 5:14-17; 2 Tm 2:8-13; **Lk 17:11-19** (We need to consciously bring all our heaviness and our suffering to the Eucharist, as well as our joy and our gratitude.)

“Were not ten made well?”

The stories of healing in the gospels are never just about healing; they are always meant to be challenges to the audience to look at something. **Today it’s the importance of expressing gratitude for all the wonders and blessings that we have, that we are**, looking at life as gift and praising first God, but also those we live with: our families, our spouses, our children, our parents, all those who support us, put up with us, help us, excuse all our shortcomings. For all this we need to be consciously grateful, and not only feel gratitude, the point of this story is express the gratitude. **It was the expression of gratitude that prompted Jesus to say, “Your faith has saved you.”**

Now faith, as I mentioned before, has many different meanings. This is the only time it means expressing gratitude, but it does here. **Your faith, your expression of gratitude, has saved you.** It’s a saving act, and that’s something we have to think about. As I think about it, I realize **it’s really what the Mass is all about. “Eucharist” itself means praise or thanksgiving.** We gather together around the risen Lord, present through the sacramental signs of bread and wine, to express the gratitude for all God has done, is now doing, and will do in our future, because God is alive and active. And sometimes we are asleep and don’t see this. The act is saving because it frees us from darkness and negativity that can easily overcome us, especially living in our particular society. **To be grateful begins with awareness of goodness.** It is very easy to take goodness for granted. It’s very typical; in fact, I’m afraid it’s the default mode of human life. When good things happen, well, of course they should, we deserve it. When bad things happen, this is the problem. So we focus on everything negative, everything bad, everything wrong, everything lacking, and we make ourselves very miserable and we push happiness right out from our midst. So this is about **waking up to all the possibilities God has laid out before us and gathering together as the body of Christ to make this awareness a saving act of gratitude, of faith.**

Now you may be thinking, well, my life isn't just good things. Of course, **our lives are all mixed bags.** We have blessings, but also anxieties, burdens, illnesses, depressions, and every kind of misfortune and heaviness. All of this, all of these are included in the Eucharist because **Christ joins all our sufferings to his on the Cross, and we add to Christ's Cross our share in suffering.** In the words of St. Augustine: "The whole Christ," meaning head and members, "offers the whole Christ to the Father." That's what we are doing here. **So we need to consciously bring all our heaviness and our suffering to the Eucharist, as well as our joy and our gratitude. In fact, the bread represents all that we are and the wine all that we suffer; and all of it is consecrated in the Mass, so that we are consecrated. Our lives are consecrated by the very bread and wine we eat, which is the body and blood of the Lord. And we become what we eat.**

Now I think we jump too quickly during the offertory time into the song. Before we sing we should think: **What do I bring today? What joys and what sorrows do I bring today to the Eucharist: do I add to the bread, do I put in the cup?** And since the Eucharist is food, at Communion we might ask: **How am I allowing God to nourish me through this community that I am in communion with? because we receive not only Christ, we receive one another.** The "whole Christ," head and members, is what we consume. And so the question: **How am I allowing Christ through my fellow parishioners to nourish me? How am I nourishing them?** because Jesus said: "Do this in memory of me." **How do I share my life with others in memory of Christ?**

Now I used to get upset about the fact that some people after communion, directly after communion, walk out of church. And to me it's a loss of a great opportunity because one of the great gifts of the Eucharist, **one of the most immediate fruits of the Eucharist, is the gift of contemplation, the gift of peace; and to sit for a few moments enjoying that peace is a great gift and opportunity.** And I'm very sad to see people completely ignore it. But then an older priest told me, "Oh, don't worry about that. The reason some people leave right after Communion is they are so impelled by the love of Christ to share him with others." So I feel better about that. But if we sincerely ask these questions, **we will be ready to leave the Mass to love and to serve the Lord.**