

Meditations: Wednesday of the Thirty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-second week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: making the lepers' cry our own; healing comes from grateful faith; giving thanks in all circumstances.

- Making the lepers' cry our own
- Healing comes from grateful faith
- Giving thanks in all circumstances

JESUS, MASTER, have mercy on us, a group of lepers call to Jesus when they finally reach Him (*Lk 17:13*). In ancient times, it was a great misfortune to be a leper. Their physical sufferings were intense, to the point that the literal translation of the name the Jews gave the disease is “whip stroke.” As if that were not enough, moral suffering compounded their physical pain, because the disease was believed to be highly contagious: people were terrified of lepers, and meticulous regulation diagnosed the disease and separated those who had it from society. The priests were responsible for the process of proving when someone was cured; they had to meet a series of conditions. Finally, the disease was attributed to the sins committed by the person who had it.

This helps us better understand the suffering and desolation of the ten lepers Jesus encountered on the way to Jerusalem. They lived on the outskirts of a village. Relatives, friends, and compassionate people brought them food each day. They had probably heard about Jesus through them; they knew that He was a rabbi, a teacher, who preached with authority and performed miracles. When Jesus approached the village, someone must have alerted the lepers to his presence. They came to greet Him from a distance, hoping He could heal them. “They waited at a distance,” a medieval saint commented, “because they did not dare come close in their condition. The same thing happens to us: we keep our distance when we obstinately persist in sin. To heal and be cured of the leprosy of our sins, let us cry out with all our might, ‘Jesus, Master, have compassion on us.’ But let us cry out with our hearts,

not our mouths. The cry of the heart is sharper. The clamor of the heart pierces the heavens and rises to the throne of God.”^[1]

THE LEPERS cry out for Jesus to heal them. He tells them to go and present themselves to the priests, who the law demanded confirm any cure. The way they set out in obedience to the Master is evidence of their faith. As they walk, they realize that they have indeed been healed, but only one of them, a Samaritan, returns to Jesus: *When he saw that he was healed, [he] turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks (Lk 17:15-16).* Jesus laments that the other nine did not return to give glory to God, that they did not want to express their gratitude for being healed. He tells the Samaritan, *Rise and go your way;*

your faith has made you well (Lk 17:19).

Contemplating today's Gospel, we can distinguish "two levels of healing: one, more superficial, concerns the body. The other deeper level touches the innermost depths of the person, what the Bible calls 'the heart,' and from there spreads to the whole of a person's life. Complete and radical healing is 'salvation.' By making a distinction between 'health' and 'salvation,' even ordinary language helps us to understand that salvation is far more than health: indeed, it is a new, full, definitive life. Furthermore, Jesus here, as in other circumstances, says the words: 'Your faith has made you whole.' It is faith that saves human beings, re-establishing them in their profound relationship with God, themselves and others; and faith is expressed in gratitude."^[2] We do not know what happened to the other lepers. They

were certainly cured of their physical ailment. But the Gospel shows Jesus acknowledging the spiritual healing of the Samaritan alone, though he seemed to be further from the faith of the Chosen People.

“Those who, like the healed Samaritan, know how to say ‘thank you,’ show that they do not consider everything as their due but as a gift that comes ultimately from God, even when it arrives through men and women or through nature. Faith thus entails the opening of the person to the Lord's grace; it means recognizing that everything is a gift, everything is grace. What a treasure is hidden in two small words: ‘thank you’!”^[3] —

*GIVE THANKS in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ*

Jesus for you (1 Thess 5:18). The antiphon for today's Mass, taken from St. Paul's teachings, invites us to express our gratitude to God frequently. Every day when we wake up, we can thank Him even for the things that we tend to take for granted, but would miss if we were ever deprived of them: breathing, feeling, seeing, walking, the beauty of nature, the sun's light and warmth, our family, the ability to love and be loved... Christians also thank God for the wonders of his grace, for everything we have undeservedly received and continue to receive every day as we progress on the path to holiness.

“Whatever your age,” wrote St. Francis de Sales, “you have not been in the world for long. God has brought you into being out of nothing, and you are what you are purely by his goodness. He has made you the noblest being in the visible

world, called to share in his eternity and capable of union with Him. He did not bring you into the world because He needed you, but solely to manifest his goodness. He has given you intelligence so that you can know Him, memory so that you can remember Him, and will so that you can love Him. He gave you imagination so that you can represent to yourself his benefits, eyes so that you can admire the marvels of creation, and a tongue so that you can praise Him... He has made you in his image [...]. Think of all that God has given you in the realm of spirit, body, and soul: He has given you health, well-being, good friends... He feeds you with his Sacraments, enlightens you with his lights, and has forgiven you so many times.”^[4]

“How beautiful the words we say every day in the Preces are,” St. Josemaria said. “You can use them as

an aspiration: *gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!* If we give thanks, God will give us more. But if our pride lays claim to what isn't ours, we will shut ourselves off from God's help.”^[5]
Let us turn to our Lady, who, in her humility, gave thanks to God for everything and thus received unimaginable gifts.

^[1] St. Bruno of Segni, *On the Gospel of Saint Luke*, no. 2, 40.

^[2] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 14-X-2007.

^[3] *Ibid.*

^[4] St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 1st part, chap. 9 and onwards, III, 34.

^[5] St. Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, 19-III-1971.

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