

HOMILY for 28th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

One day a Catholic priest goes to a barber for a haircut. After the barber has finished, the priest asks him how much he owes.

The barber says, “For a man of the cloth, the haircut is free!”

The priest thinks, “What a nice man!” And the next day the barber finds a case of wine outside his shop.

Then, a minister comes in for a haircut. Again, the barber tells him that the haircut is free.

The minister thinks, “What a nice man!” And the next day, the barber finds a box of chocolates outside his shop.

Then, a rabbi comes in for a haircut. Again, the barber gives the haircut on the house.

The rabbi thinks, “What a nice man!” The next day, the barber finds a long line of rabbis outside of his shop!

Like those customers of that barbershop, we appreciate something given to us freely. At the young age, we’ve been taught to say “Thank you” when someone gives us something or, does something nice for us. That’s why the adults often remind the little ones to say “Thank you” when they receive a gift. That’s exactly the message that Jesus wants to talk to us about in this Sunday’s Gospel. This Gospel is the same one that we usually read on Thanksgiving Day. The story is about ten lepers who came to Jesus asking Him to heal them. He did it and restored them to normal health without charging them anything. However, He asked them to come to the Temple & give thanks to God for that healing gift. Most of them did not do that & went on with their lives as if God did not do anything for them. Only one of them was grateful for that miracle & did what Jesus asked him to do. He happened to be a Samaritan, not a member of God’s people. Jesus was surprised to see the lack of gratitude for the miracle that He did. So, He asked, “Were not all ten made whole? What are the other nine? Was there no one to return & give thanks to God except this foreigner?”

As you can see, Jesus was shocked to find out that one out of ten healed lepers came back to give thanks to God. That means, only ten percent of the people are grateful for God’s blessings in their lives while ninety percent are not. Just think about that for a moment & see why our world has been impacted by that attitude. The rich only care about getting more wealth for themselves & give God no credit for helping them achieve their great success. They’re not grateful for their workers & community that have poured out sweat & blood to help them build up their fortune. They do not care about the common good & give back to the community. On the other hand, the poor demand the community to give them what they’re entitled to & continue to cause fights & uprisings wherever they go. They’re not even grateful for the basic necessities that God has given them each day to survive. That is the chaotic situation of our current world as ninety percent of its population do not seem to have any sense of gratitude to God & one another. Because of our lack of gratitude, we’ve turned on each other instead of respecting & cooperating with one another.

However, it’s not just the number of ninety percent of the population without a grateful attitude that made Jesus worry about. Here’s another fact that troubled Him a lot. Today’s Gospel reports, “...One of them realizing that he had been cured, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself on his face at the feet of Jesus & spoke his praises. This man was a

Samaritan... Jesus took the occasion & said, ‘...Was there no one to return & give thanks to God except this foreigner?’” Jesus apparently was shocked to find out that the grateful leper was a Samaritan, not a member of God’s people. But, that’s not the only example in the Bible to show us that a grateful person was not a member of God’s people. Today’s First Reading tells us the story of another leper named Naaman, the army commander of the Aramean, who was not considered a member of God’s people & was healed by prophet Elisha. After that healing miracle, the story reads, “...He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God [Prophet Elisha]. On his arrival, he stood before him & said, ‘Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant.’” As you can see, the grateful person in both Biblical stories was not a member of God’s people. I don’t know if you were surprised like Jesus to learn about that or not. But, why does a Gentile know how to be grateful while a member of God’s people struggles to do that?

For me, I consider gratitude to be the cornerstone of all the virtues & the important connection between me & God, between me & everyone around me also. That virtue helps me connect to God & see God’s love in my life every day. It keeps me grounded & makes me realize why I need God’s help & guidance in this world. Without gratitude, I might think that God has nothing to do with all of my accomplishments. I could assume that I am invincible & would not need God in my life. Besides connecting me to God, gratitude also helps me learn to appreciate everyone & everything around me. Without them, my life would not be the same. They give me the support & friendship that I need to carry out my daily duties faithfully. They stand up for me & make great sacrifices to help me complete my mission. They give me encouragement & come to my aid in times of need. I cannot take them for granted. That is why you’ve seen me acknowledge & give thanks to my benefactors & volunteers at the end of each weekend Mass or, whenever I have an opportunity to do that. Gratitude has become an important part of my life & has helped me see the world in a different light.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus was surely annoyed to see only one grateful leper out of ten healed people come back to give thanks to God. We would feel the same if people do not appreciate what we’ve done for them. I dare to say that many current problems in our society are rooted in the lack of gratitude to God & one another. If each & every citizen would learn to give thank to God & one another every day, many social problems would slowly disappear & our world would be transformed into a better place. You can try to adopt a grateful attitude & see how it might change your life.