

“Where are the nine?” Mercy and Ingratitude! (28th Sunday)

How grateful are you to God for all the blessings you have received from him? What can adversity teach us about the blessing of thanksgiving, and the healing power of love and mercy?

The old saying goes: “A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity”. When adversity strikes you find out who truly is your brother, sister, and friend.

The Gospel records an unusual encounter between two peoples who had been in enmity, divided for centuries. The Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another even though Samaria was located in the central part of Judaea. Both peoples were openly hostile whenever their paths crossed. In this gospel narrative we see one rare exception - a Samaritan leper in company with nine Jewish lepers. Sometimes adversity forces people to drop their barriers and forget their prejudices. When this band of Jewish and Samaritan lepers saw Jesus they made a bold request. They didn't ask for healing, but instead asked for mercy.

So what is the significance of these ten lepers asking for mercy? They knew they are in need of healing, not just physical, but spiritual healing as well. They approach Jesus with contrition and faith, because they believe, he can release their burden of guilt and suffering and make restoration of body and soul possible. Their request for mercy is both a plea for pardon and release from suffering. Jesus did show mercy and heals them from their misery.

The word *mercy* literally means "*sorrowful at heart*". But mercy is something more than compassion, or heartfelt sorrow at another's misfortune. Compassion empathizes with the sufferer. But mercy

goes further - it removes suffering. A merciful person shares in another's misfortune and suffering as if it were his or her own. And such a person will do everything in his or her power to dispel that misery.

Then, why did only one leper out of ten return to show gratitude? And that one happens to be a Samaritan? "Gratefulness", another word which expresses *gratitude of heart* and a thankful disposition, is related to **grace** - which means the release of loveliness. Gratitude is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan from outside community, approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God.

God wants us to be grateful. That's why he asked, "Where are the other nine?" ***Ingratitude leads to lack of love, kindness and intolerance towards others.*** Ingratitude hurts deeply. Many times I have met parents and grandparents at nursing home, experiencing "being abandoned", after having spent their life and energy for their children, bcs the children are too busy to make a visit or a ph. call.

If we do not recognize and appreciate the mercy and help shown to us, we will be ungrateful and unkind towards others. *Ingratitude is forgetfulness, or a poor return for kindness received.* Ingratitude can easily lead to lack of charity and intolerance towards others, as well as to their vices.

How often have we been ungrateful to our parents, pastors, teachers, and neighbors? Do you express gratitude to God for His abundant help and mercy towards you and are you gracious, kind, and merciful towards your neighbor in their time of need?

Joke of the day: Once a pastor was asked by one of the presidential candidates, "Name something my government can do to help your church if I am elected president." The pastor replied, "please stop making one-dollar bills."!