

Saint Thomas' and St Thomas' of the Air Church  
Trinity XVI  
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rmcneely+

... but where are the nine?

For the second week in a row

Jesus breaks down the societal barrier of prejudice

And hatred in the Gospel for the week.

With another parable in which a Samaritan is the hero.

And for the second week in a row, St Paul

Addresses the secondary role of the Law

In favor of the spirit behind it.

The Collect for the week prays for increase in us of

Faith, hope and charity,

The Theological Virtues.

Worthy to be understood and incorporated in our lives.

However, the thrust of the Gospel of the week

points us in an additional direction:

To Gratitude.

It is on gratitude that I would focus us this morning.

The subject arises in Luke's account of a healing.

One that reflects the power of Faith Hope and Charity

One that is somewhat anomalous

Jesus has completed his journey to Galilee,

And has turned toward Jerusalem

For his appointment with death

And our salvation.

He walks into an unnamed village.  
Just outside the village is a colony of lepers  
Living in accordance with Jewish law, separate and apart from the  
rest of the population  
    Begging food and alms for their sustenance.

From afar off, 10 of them spot Jesus and recognize Him  
    They address Him as “Master”  
    They beg His mercy.

These 10 people afflicted with the dread disease  
    Seemingly recognize Jesus  
    As a man who can heal them.  
    A man of compassion.  
        Likely a rarity  
        In the lives of the lepers.

Jesus give us this incomprehensible response:  
    “ Go, shew yourselves unto the priests.”

The 10 are forbidden in the synagogue,  
    Forbidden to come close to anyone  
    Let alone the priests.  
    And would immediately be confined and punished.  
    Even if they could get near them.

We would expect the 10 to stand in confusion  
    Questioning how they could do any such thing.

But we are surprised again.  
The 10 turn about and head for the priests.

Now, Jesus directed them to the priests  
    In compliance with Jewish law.

You see, it is only the priests that could examine the 10  
And certify them cleansed  
And allow them into the synagogue and Temple  
Once declared free of the disease they would be  
Shorn  
Thoroughly washed and scrubbed.  
But even once pronounced free of the disease  
the law of Moses required the 10 to make an offering  
of two sparrows, three lambs and a food offering.  
An impossible task for the outcasts who barely could beg enough  
to eat.

But despite these obstacles  
The 10 turned and headed off to find the priests.

Notice, Jesus had not done what we have seen Him do before in  
other healings:

He did not touch them  
Or even speak their healing  
Or any of the other acts we have seen precede a healing.

But miraculously, along the way  
Their putrid sores vanished and  
They were healed.

But what was a story of compassion and power  
Takes an unanticipated twist:

One of the 10 returns when he realizes Jesus has freed him from  
the disease

Falls at His feet and  
Gave Him thanks.

Jesus dismisses the Samaritan saying

“Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Pointing us along the way toward the lesson for the day  
Are the Theological Virtues at work.

Theo; meaning of God

Logical; meaning “the study of”.

So; the virtues from God that guide us to Him.

Virtues granted to us at our baptism

Faith, hope and charity.

The virtues with which all others find their way into us

Into our character

Into our souls.

The Faith of the 10 is manifest

From the very beginning of the story

Their faith shone through.

Their faith in Jesus, faith in God

Led them to Him

Prompted them to seek his mercy.

Even if it meant they risked punishment

for breaching the edict of the Jewish law isolating them.

They turned and headed to the priests

Unhealed

With all their sores and miseries

And with no indicia of their healing

They turned and walked in search of the priests

Was the illogical instruction to go the priests a test?

A test of their faith?

If it was, they passed the test.

Their Faith led them on.

That Faith led them to Hope

That is: to fully expect that Jesus would heal their disease.

They knew to a certainty that their diseased bodies would be healed.

That is the indicia of Hope.

The Charity of Jesus, the Christian Love

To heal the outcasts flowed from the lepers', Faith and Hope.

But the lessons for us do not end there.

We learn another valuable lesson from a Samaritan

Gratitude

Something we must always keep in mind

Our lives are enriched by the gifts of God

By His answers to our prayers.

By His creation, all around us.

By our salvation

By His Son, our Lord.

By His love, and

The love of and for each other.

We must never lose sight of them active in our lives.

Never take them for granted.

Every prayer should contain recognition and gratitude for God in our lives.

Every meal should begin with a grace,

returning thanks to God

the source of all we have.

These seemingly insignificant habits serve as frequent reminders  
 Essential reminders  
 Of God in our lives.  
 And keep refreshed and alive  
 The daily acts of God's love in our lives.

The Holy Communion Service itself  
 Reflects the elements of the 10 lepers.  
 The sinners/lepers open the story the way we open the Communion  
 Service:  
 Lord, have mercy on us.  
 The Kyrie Eleison of Holy Communion.

The liturgy radiates gratitude as did the Samaritan  
 Let me show you what I mean:

We conclude the Epistle with  
 "Thanks be to God".

At the oblation and the dedication of the offertory  
 We acknowledge in gratitude:  
 "All things come of Thee O Lord,  
 and of Thine own, hath we given Thee".

We begin the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church  
 "who by thy Holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers  
 and supplications and thanks for all men..."

It is fitting that as we begin the Canon of Holy Communion  
 We say "... that we should at all times and in all places,  
 Give thanks unto Thee. . ."

At the consecration of the bread and the wine we declare that Christ gave thanks before distributing to the Apostles.

We conclude the Oblation with: “rendering unto Thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.”

The Invocation seeks His acceptance of: “our this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. . .”

The Communion concludes “we most heartily thank thee . . .

In the final blessing and dismissal, you declare in response to the beneficent: “Depart in peace”; your final words of the Communion; “Thanks be to God”.

So, you see, this notion of thanks permeates the Holy Communion Service.

It is that central to Christian doctrine.

It is there for a reason.

Not just the empty words of a polite society:  
“Please and thank you.”

But as an acknowledgement of profound blessing  
A remindful showing of respect and value  
Of all God that provides in our lives.  
We pay that debt in gratitude.

The Greek word for the Holy Communion Service itself is Eucharist:

Which literally means: “Thanksgiving”.

Gratitude is one of the more important virtues that should adorn every child of God.

It is a sign of a noble soul  
 For only a good person can be truly grateful.  
 Our gratitude is not by way of some few isolated acts but is a constant spirit.

It begins with each new day granted us by God.  
 It continues in each person who has benefited us  
 In gratitude for our natural faculties,  
 Our eyes, ears, hands, minds are His gifts to us.  
 For each blade of grass, each flower, all of Nature  
 Calls out "I am God's gift to you".

The church

The sacraments  
 The ecclesiastical year  
 The sacred liturgy  
 The Redeemer  
 Are all for us. Gifts from God.

A song of gratitude should be on our lips even in times of suffering  
 Even when we do not understand the ways of God.  
 For we know that all God wills is for our good.

But how soon does our song of thanks die out.

In conclusion this:

Some see a simile or metaphor in this Gospel story.  
 With the village standing as the Church  
 The 10 lepers as us,  
 As sinners.  
 The leprosy as our sins.

Consider that for a moment.

If that is true

As Jesus points out

Were there not 10 cleansed

But where are the 9?

The question for us today is:

Are we among the 9?