

Grateful for the Graces

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (2 Kgs 5:14-17)

Naaman, the leper, obeys the prophet

¹⁴So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.^c

Thanksgiving of Naaman

¹⁵He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please **accept a gift** from your servant.” ¹⁶Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it.” And despite Naaman’s urging, he still refused. ¹⁷Naaman said: “If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth,^a for your servant will no longer make burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD.

THE FOCUS: **Gratitude**

COMMENTARY

- V.14 says Naaman is a Syrian commander who is a leper. He asked help from Elisha.
- He obeys Elisha, the man of God.
- He plunges into the River Jordan seven times.
- The result: He is cleansed.
- In v.15, Naaman returns to Elisha.
- Naaman articulates his realization. His realization is: There is no God on earth except in Israel.
- He acknowledges the God of Israel, not his god or gods.
- Naaman also offers a gift (as a thanksgiving) to Elisha.
- Naaman shows humility. He considers himself “your servant” to the prophet. He becomes a humble servant.
- In v.16, Elisha does not accept Naaman’s gift. He is adamant in rejecting the gift. Why? The text does not say.
- But the refusal of Elisha makes Naaman get the two-mule loads of earth and he makes a promise to offer holocaust (burnt sacrifice) to the God of Israel, the God of Elisha (v.17) Out of this Israelite earth, he will erect in Aram an altar of the God of Israel.

REFLECTIONS

The God of Israel is a powerful God. He is the God who sends the prophet Elisha to heal Naaman. God is for



all peoples, not only for Israel.

Naaman on his part, though a commander who should not be commanded, humbly obeys the prophet (man of God). He desperately needs to be healed. His gods are not powerful enough to heal him.

When healed at the River Jordan, he returns to the prophet. He is a gentleman, he has a sense of gratitude. He does not forget the prophet who does him a favor. To show his gratitude, he attempts to give gifts. When rejected, he does not force himself. Instead he exercises his creativity.

He concretizes this by asking for soil from Israel to build an altar of God in his pagan country.

Thus he promotes the worship of the God of Israel in his own native land.

How do we show our gratitude to God for intervening in our lives?

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4)

THE LORD HAS REVEALED TO THE NATION HIS SAVING POWER

SECOND READING (2 Tim 2:8-13)

The imperative to Timothy

^{8*} **Remember Jesus Christ**, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my **gospel**, ^{9g}for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. ^{10b}Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in **Christ Jesus**, together with eternal glory

What happens if we remember Jesus Christ?

¹¹This saying is trustworthy:/ If we have died with **him**/ we shall also live with **him**;/ ¹²if we persevere/ we shall also reign with **him**./ But if we deny **him**/ **he** will deny us./ ¹³If we are unfaithful/ **he** remains faithful,/ for **he** cannot deny **himself**.

THE FOCUS: Remembering Jesus Christ

COMMENTARY

- In v.8, Paul exhorts Timothy, the church leader, to remember Jesus Christ. Why? Did Timothy forget him?
- In reminding Timothy, his “disciple,” Paul also says who Jesus is: raised from the dead, a descendant of David, his gospel, cause of his sufferings, chains, being treated like a criminal [now in prison] (v.9).
- Paul does not want the word of God (not chained) and the one whom he has proclaimed go to waste or taken for granted.
- Paul agonizes when Jesus is forgotten by his fellow worker.
- In v.10, Paul continues to bear suffering so that the chosen ones will be saved too.
- Salvation is brought about by Jesus. It is eternal glory.
- In verses 11-13, we find a series of conditional clauses which highlight Christian destiny.
- V.11 talks about dying and living with Jesus (in baptism).
- V.12 talks about the reward of persevering in our baptismal vows. We will reign with him.
- The vows are lived in the proclamation of the kingdom of God.
- The opposite of perseverance here is denial; here it is to renege our baptismal commitments (v.12).
- In verse 13, we may be unfaithful but Jesus remains faithful. He does not change.
- Unfaithfulness is betrayal of oneself, denying of what you are in the eyes of God.

REFLECTIONS

Paul does not fail to remind his colleague, Timothy.

If you are a church leader, it does not mean you don't need reminders anymore.

The church leader must always think of Jesus Christ, must center his life on him.

Paul has poured so much energy, has suffered a lot in spreading the faith in Jesus. He seems to appeal to Timothy to recognize his efforts.

Remembering Jesus means living with him, assures us of his reign and salvation. Remembering is a sign of appreciation and thanksgiving.

Forgetfulness does not help the church / anyone. It does

not build relationship with God and with fellow disciples. Forgetfulness is not a good sign of leadership.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 17:11-19)

Setting: Journey to Jerusalem

^{11*} As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.*

The ten lepers

¹²As he was entering a village, ten lepers met [him]. They stood at a distance from him ¹³and raised their voice, saying, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” ^{14*}And when he saw them, he said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.”* As they were going they were cleansed.

The one leper, a Samaritan

¹⁵And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Jesus said in reply, “Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine?”

COMMENTARY

- In v.11 Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem.
- He traverses through Galilee and Samaria (Galilee first, then Samaria, the text inverts the order).
- V.12 introduces the ten lepers. They seem to be organized and know their limitations.
- Together they stand at a distance,
- In v. 13, together they raise their voice in chorus.
- V.14 presents the response of Jesus. Instead of saying, “Come here,” he says “Go to the priests...”
- Jesus asks them to present themselves to the priests in Jerusalem (probably as a sign that something is happening out there. The priests must be able to interpret correctly their healing). They obey and are cleansed.
- In v.15, one of the lepers is focused by the writer.
- He returns, glorifies God in a loud voice (full volume). He sees the hand of God in his healing.
- He worships Jesus and thanks him (v.16).
- This cleansed leper is a Samaritan.
- What is so important about specifying this one as Samaritan?
- The Jews and the Samaritans do not like each other for religious and historical reasons.
- In v.17, Jesus accounts those who are cleansed. Where are the others?
- What happens to them? Are they not healed?
- Jesus' questioning reminds us of the value of gratefulness.
- We cannot move on without returning to the source of grace and blessing.

- The Samaritan, considered foreigner and enemy of the Jews, has done the right thing.
- Spontaneously, he goes back to Jesus, even if it means delay and being alone in showing himself to the priests in Jerusalem.
- V.18 picks up the important elements of vv.15-16 (returned, thanked).
- In v.19, Jesus makes him stand and go. Jesus affirms his faith.

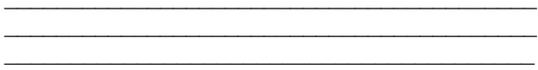
REFLECTIONS

Jesus teaches gratefulness. To be grateful is to go back to Jesus, the source of healing and blessing. Gratefulness should come out spontaneously. It does not need to be taught to adults or to those who have lived long enough.

In childhood, it should be spontaneous already if we have a good upbringing.

The insignificant, rejected Samaritan outdoes his fellow lepers who are supposedly Jews.

By going back to Jesus, the Samaritan receives another pat from him.



II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about thanksgiving, after the healing/cleansing.

The Second Reading indirectly talks about thanksgiving by remembering Jesus to whom we owe our salvation.

The Gospel Reading again talks about thanksgiving after healing. It tells us that not just one should go back to thank, but all who have been healed and have benefited from God’s loving grace.

How to develop your sharing / homily

Do your kids say “Thank you” when you give them candies or something?

Do you say “Thank you” when you receive a favor?

Filipinos have sense of “utang na loob.” They say “walang utang na loob” if their children or friends are ungrateful.

Giving thanks is a universal human response to the person who does favors to us.

It is learned from childhood.

In our catholic practice, we offer mass when we graduate from college, when we pass board exams, and when we get a new job.

Many mass offerings in churches are thanksgiving masses.

The First and the Gospel Readings are consistent on

the theme of thanksgiving.

Naaman gives thanks to Elisha for the favor he has done to him. Elisha is instrumental in healing the leprosy of Naaman.

In the Gospel, one leper upon being healed goes back to Jesus to give thanks.

The Second Reading indirectly helps us understand the theme of thanksgiving. The important word here is **remember**.

It adds to the time dimension of thanksgiving.

As we constantly remember the favor from a person, we are also continuously grateful to him.

We esteem, revere, respect, praise people who do us a favor.

It is contradiction to speak against them.

We are proud of people who are generous to us (like lending money when we need it most, like being with us in times of grief)

Gratefulness is not a particular Christian characteristic, but it should be found in every Christian.

Gratefulness is required of us by Jesus who continuously shows mercy to us.

Gratefulness leads us to go back to God.

Gratefulness leads us to bow down before him and to glorify him.

If we do not feel like worshipping God, maybe we are not at all grateful to him, maybe we have forgotten that God is good to us.

We cannot glorify God, sing songs to him if we are not grateful to him, if we do not remember any favor coming from him.

The sacred writers are inculcating in us the need to respond properly to God.

God has given us favors, not little favors, but big ones like healings, provisions and salvation.

The eucharist is in itself thanksgiving.

It comes from the Greek word, *eucaristew*, which means “I give thanks.”

In the eucharist, we give thanks to God for the gift of the Spirit, for the gift of the Son and for the salvation he has brought to us.

When we attend mass, we are expressing our thanks to him for all those graces and blessings.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is Indigenous Peoples Sunday and Extreme Poverty Day.
2. What are the things you are grateful for? (HM)