CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, October 9, 2022

Return to the Lord with Thanksgiving

Written by Allison Gingras

2 Kings 5:14-17
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19



Naaman was cured of leprosy by dipping seven times in the Jordan according to the prophet Elisha's instructions. Recognizing the miraculous movement of God at that moment, he returned to Elisha, proclaiming, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel." Naaman experienced a profound conversion as the power of God transformed him from the outside — in. He knew this was not a magical cure and from where the healing came, vowing to offer worship to no other god than the one true God.

In Psalm 98, we hear, "Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds." Church father, Origen of Alexandria (c.185 – c.253), interpreted the "new song" as a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Christ. Naaman's cleansing from leprosy, and his encounter with the one true God, put a new song in his heart long before the Passion of our Lord, and we should continue to sing this new song two millennia later.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus cleanses ten lepers, yet only one returns in gratitude with thanksgiving. He, too, having been profoundly moved by the grace of God upon him, cannot help but make a return to the Lord, and for that is told, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you." When healed from your suffering, faithfulness seems easy compared to those who remain steadfast in love and trust in the Lord, when the illness, pain, or dilemma remains.

In 2 Timothy, St. Paul addresses this, jailed and suffering for the Gospel, "if we persevere we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself." St. Paul offers a remarkable example of uniting our crosses with those of the Lord and presenting them as intercessory prayer for the conversion of souls, "[bearing] with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus."

I have suffered from Dyshidrotic Eczema for years — it is characterized by blistering and peeling of the skin on one's hands and feet — I often referred to myself during particularly gruesome flares as a leper. At times, the disease rendered my hands useless, and I found myself begging for the Lord to heal me. It took three years for those prayers to be answered. However, while I waited on the Lord, I learned many beautiful lessons. My condition presented numerous opportunities to embrace the virtue of patience, humility, and fortitude.

Just as the disease left my hands, it attacked my feet and remains to this day. However, I can accept this suffering, seeing the blessings instead of wallowing in self-pity and disappointment with how the Lord chooses to answer my prayers. I prefer to focus on this suffering as intercessory prayer for others, just as St. Paul taught, especially my loved ones away from the faith. Grateful in His mercy, I've regained full use of my hands so I may live my vocation as wife and mother, Catholic writer, and social media evangelist to the fullest.

Throughout all three of today's readings runs a thread of gratitude and thanksgiving at seeing the wonder and goodness of God. There is a profound desire to be close to the Lord. To develop and maintain a relationship with Him — not for what He does but for who He is.

How do we make a show of thanks to the Lord? Do we remain a few minutes after Mass, having just received the Eucharist, whose very meaning is thanksgiving, and offer a prayer to the Lord? When was the last time we went "glorifying God in a loud voice; [falling] at the feet of Jesus and [thanking] him," even if only in our hearts and upon our knees. Does our behavior reflect, like Naaman, the knowledge there is no other God but our good and mighty God?

— Allison Gingras

Prayer

With joy and trust in my heart,
I will make a return to the Lord,
with thanksgiving for all
He has done for me.
For the blessings, the challenges,
and everything in between,
I will offer worship only to you,
the one true God!