

Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters, the other day, I received a hand-written note from a little guy, whom I had the great privilege of baptizing with his little brothers. Just the joy of baptizing them both would have been enough; however, the short little note from him filled my heart with great joy! Gratitude has that effect! Gratitude means that a gift has been acknowledged with the affection of family! Gratitude means I acknowledge a gift with joy!

Today, the gospel teaches us about the joy of Gratitude. At the end of the Gospel of St. John, we are told that if everything done by Christ and everything He taught would have been recorded, it would fill every book in the world. This means that the Lord Jesus worked so many miracles for so many, that it was nigh impossible to record them all, that His teaching was much broader than just that we have in the four Gospels, and is kept in what we call the deposit of faith passed on down from the Apostles. However, it also means that those miracles and teachings recorded in the Gospels have a special significance that the Holy Spirit wants us to know and ponder. Such is the case with the miracle of the healing of the ten lepers in today's gospel. All ten were healed, but only the Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews for being an apostate, only he came back shouting his joy to the world and falling at the feet of Jesus to acknowledge the gift he had received! We can hear the note of sadness in the voice of Jesus for the lack of gratitude in the other nine who were also healed!

Jesus is saddened by the lack of gratitude because of the innate value of Gratitude to the life of our souls! Gratitude means I acknowledge a gift with joy; by it, we acknowledge a gift has been received with the affection of family: this is how I am loved! Jesus has made me family to Himself!

Secondly, Gratitude keeps us grounded in the truth, which is our ongoing relationship with God the giver of all good things in our lives. To be ungrateful to God is not only unjust, but it is an illusion. My gratitude acknowledges that everything I have is a gift of the Good God: creation, life, talents, opportunities, hope in heaven, the Sacraments, the gift of the Holy Eucharist, and on and on!

We don't create ourselves, and, we are constantly being created and enlivened by God!

Thirdly, my Gratitude is the perfect antidote to sin. Sin is ultimately selfishness, it turns our lives into ourselves and a preoccupation with our selves, to the exclusion of others. I come to believe that I am the center of my own universe! Gratitude opens up our lives to God and to others. It directly contradicts our self-centeredness, self-indulgence, and self-absorption. It builds a sense of community, and even affirms that fact that you and I are loved. It counteracts depression and releases me to be self-giving to others. Gratitude has been called the most beautiful of flowers in the garden of virtues; however, it needs to be cultivated like any beautiful flower. This young boy's note of thanks brought me great joy; in the same way, our gratitude is received by the Lord with great joy as well!