

Homily based on the readings from October 12, 2025 (2 Kings 5.14-17; 2 Timothy 2.8-13; Luke 17.11-19)

What would your life be like if, when you woke up *today*, you only had the things for which you had given thanks to God *yesterday*? Even if we have heard this question before, it is still extremely unsettling. If something like that actually happened, most of us (myself included) would be in a *terrible* position. Consider the amazing gifts we have received throughout our lives, most of which we have probably taken for granted: our health, our family, our education, our employment, our homes – the very food on our tables. It is a sad truth that most people only pay attention to these necessities when something goes wrong – when they experience illness or hardship or loss. As a species, we are much more inclined to complain about what we do *not* have, rather than to give thanks for what we *do*.

This message is reinforced by the events from today's Gospel. On his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus encounters ten individuals suffering from the

scourge of leprosy. Jesus, *being Jesus*, immediately heals them all – without asking anything from them in return. Nevertheless, he is clearly disappointed when only *one* of the ten comes back to give thanks for his miraculous recovery: “Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine?”

We have no idea what life was like for the ten lepers before they met Jesus, but I *imagine* that they all prayed fervently for healing – that they made *promises* about what they would do if God restored them to health. It is possible, of course, that some of the nine attempted to fulfill whatever commitments they had made, but I suspect most of them simply went about their business as if nothing had happened.

As dispiriting as this story is, we have to acknowledge that all of *us* are guilty of ingratitude as well – and not just to God. If we honestly look at our own lives, we will see that the people who have given us the most – our parents, our teachers, our spouses – are generally the people we have thanked the least. In some cases, particularly as children, we may be

ignorant of what others are doing on our behalf. Nevertheless, as we get older, ingratitude becomes an intentional choice. None of us enjoys being dependent on other people. We all cultivate the illusion of being in control of our own lives, of being the masters of our own destiny. Whenever we say “thank you” to somebody else, and we truly mean it, we are acknowledging that we are not actually self-sufficient. Giving thanks is not only a matter of politeness, but a fundamental form of humility.

There is another aspect of thanksgiving, which – although not explicitly mentioned in today’s Gospel – is essential to the life of every Christian. As we all know, the sacrament we are preparing receive is called the *Holy Eucharist*. There are many other terms we use to describe the sacrament – such as the *Mass* and the *Lord’s Supper* – but the word *Eucharist* carries a *special* significance. In the original Greek, it actually means *Thanksgiving*.

Every Biblical account of the Last Supper mentions Christ himself giving thanks. For example, in the Gospel of Mathew, we hear that:

[Jesus] took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Likewise, Saint Paul tells us that:

the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Thanksgiving was not a peripheral aspect of the Last Supper, but is central to the mystery of Christ’s Body and Blood. When Jesus commands us to “[d]o this in remembrance of me,” he is not just talking about recreating a particular ritual – but about participating in his supreme act of thanksgiving.

The good news, of course, is that God never assigns us an impossible task. The Holy Eucharist, at its core, is not about anything we do ourselves – but about God’s action in our lives. The Eucharist is not only an encounter with Jesus Christ, but an opportunity for transformation. As Pope Leo the Great observed:

[T]he effect of our sharing in the body and blood of Christ is to *change* us into what we receive.

All of us possess the ability, like the nine unworthy lepers, to walk away from Jesus. On the other hand, if our *objective* is to join with the Samaritan in *thankfully* returning to Christ, then we *must* open our souls to receiving God’s infinite love and mercy. The only way to overcome the weakness of our mortal nature – to be healed of our own spiritual leprosy – is to surrender ourselves fully to Christ’s divine nature. Only by sharing in the perfect thanksgiving of Jesus Christ can any of us truly give thanks for the wondrous gifts we *continue* to receive – this day, every day, and in the eternal day that is to come.