

28 Sunday – Luke 17:11-19

Still on the road to Jerusalem, Jesus meets ten lepers. Like the blind man outside Jericho, they cry out to him for mercy. Jesus did not reject their request. They are typical of so many in Luke's gospel who encounter Jesus' compassion for those whom society rejected. He cured them, or rather they went to the priests as the law demanded and found themselves cured.

This story, like that of Elisha and Naaman, has a sequel. One of the lepers saw beyond his cure to the God who through Jesus made it possible. He turned back, praised God and expressed his gratitude to Jesus. Like Naaman he was a foreigner. But he was no ordinary foreigner; he was a Samaritan, one of those, who do not associate with Jews except in illness and disease. Misery finds company, the great equalizer.

Nine of them disappeared: they did not see beyond their healing. The word of Jesus had already been taken from their hearts, whether by Satan or through their inability to think beyond the present. "Where are the other nine?" Jesus was expecting, waiting for them, like the father looking out for his son. "Were none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner, this immigrant?"

The point of the physical healing of Jesus was to lead to spiritual healing, to a metanoia or turning around, a change of direction in repentance. Encountering the mercy of God should move us to the praise of God. The nationality of the man fulfilled the program that Jesus had proclaimed in the synagogue at Nazareth and anticipated the successful mission of Philip to the Samaritans and of the disciples to the ends of the earth.

Lazarus was raised from the dead and her brother's healing led Marth to declare, "I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the one who is to come into the world." This was essentially Peter's confession in the other gospels, but on the lips of Martha in John's. Jesus ends this passage with the true message of miracles, "Stand up and go: ***your faith has saved you.***" In other words, it is your faith that saves you because the miracle has led to your salvation through your faith.

Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes writes in *Give Us This Day*, "Just like Naaman and the Samaritan, who were socially excluded because of their skin disorders and their otherness, today's refugees have been seen as ritually unclean because of ***human-made purity laws***. Many people throughout the world find

themselves in inhuman and oppressive situations where they are treated as if they are lepers, ritually or otherwise unclean.

"The **good news** is that the Lord knows that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore are brothers and sisters to each other. The Lord hears their cries for assistance through his mission and ministry, he erases any stigmas, stereotypes, prejudices, and oppressions resulting from skin disorders, skin color differences, foreigner or un-welcome status, and so forth."

Pope Leo XIV's apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* (I have loved you), is about **love and care for the poor**. It is a follow up of Pope Francis' encyclical *Dilexit Nos* (He has loved us), an exhortation on the Church's care for the poor.

The document also addresses the church's tradition of working for and with migrants—which today is "expressed in initiatives such as refugee reception centers, border missions and the efforts of Caritas Internationalis and other institutions"—saying the church's mission is to all living on the peripheries.

Pope Leo in his apostolic exhortation begins with the story of the woman who poured costly oil on Jesus' head, only to be upbraided by one of the disciples who fretted, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." Jesus' reply is often seen as an excuse for indifference to the clamant needs of the poor: "You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me," before asserting that as long as the Gospel is proclaimed, this woman's kindness to him will be told.

Pope Leo draws an important conclusion: "No sign of affection, even the smallest, will ever be forgotten, especially if it is shown to those who are suffering. **Attending to the poor is not only about money. It is about affection.** The Gospel call is no mere noble obligation; (but also) the call is to solidarity."

That is why our tutor possibilities in our Grade School and our High School give us the opportunities to show affection and kindness. Those who deliver food to the shut ins through our Mercy Neighborhood Ministry also gives opportunities to practice affection and love. All our programs and our St. Francis de Sales gatherings give us the opportunity to show affection and love for one another, like Mary and Martha, through our Wednesday Mass and Meals, our Book Discussion Gatherings, and through our Scripture Study, and so forth.