Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) 2022

At the end of the fourth Gospel, St John's Gospel, we are told that if everything Christ did during his brief earthly life were written down, the **entire world** would not contain the **books**.

We can infer, therefore, that **many** - maybe even the **majority** - of Christ's miracles and encounters were **not recorded** in the New Testament.

So why did St Luke include **this** one? Clearly because of the **lesson** that Christ teaches us by it: **the** **beauty of gratitude**.

* The one leper who came back to thank Jesus is praised for this **gratitude**.
* We can almost hear the **sadness** in Christ's heart at the **lack** of gratitude in the other nine who were healed.

Why does Christ **value** gratitude so **much**? Is he vain? Is his self-esteem so weak that he gets **depressed** if we do not praise and thank him?

No. He values gratitude because **gratitude is valuable** - it's valuable for **us**, for the **health of our souls**.

In the **first** place, gratitude keeps us **grounded in the truth,**which is key for our ongoing relationship with God.

* To be **ungrateful** to God is not only **unjust**, but it's also living an **illusion**.
* The simple fact is that **everything we have is a gift from God: c**reation, life, talents, opportunities, hope in heaven, the grace that helps us persevere in doing what is right - these are all **God's gifts**.
* We don't create ourselves!

In the **second** place, gratitude is the perfect **antidote to sin**. Sin turns us in on our selves, like an ingrown toenail; gratitude **opens us up** to God and neighbor.

* It directly **contradicts** self-centeredness, self-indulgence, and self-absorption.
* It **builds** bridges, **unites** communities, and **softens**hearts.
* It counteracts depression and releases anxiety.

Gratitude is one of the most **beautiful flowers** in the garden of virtue - what a pity that it's so **rare**!

 God wants us to **develop** the **virtue of gratitude** because he wants us to **experience the joy** that comes from knowing we are **loved** by him without **limits or conditions**.

It is such an **important** virtue, that God **built it into** **four** of the **Ten** Commandments - the **first** four, in fact.

The **First** Commandment enjoins us to love and worship the one true God and none other.

* Worship starts by **recognizing** God's greatness,
* **praising** him for it,
* and **thanking** him for his benefits.
* The **heart of worship** is **gratitude**.

This is why **Naaman the Syrian**, whom we heard about in the First Reading, **changed his religion** after being **cured**.

He wanted to give the prophet Elisha a **gift**, to show his **gratitude** to Israel's God.  But Elisha wouldn't **accept** it.

So instead, Naaman **loads up two mules** with **sacks** full of **soil** taken from around the Jordan River.

* Naaman wanted to **build an altar** back home on top of **some land**that was connected to the God of Israel, and worship there.
* He says, "I will no longer offer... sacrifice to any other god except the Lord."

He was **fulfilling the First Commandment**, because he was **grateful** to God.

The **Second** and **Third** Commandments help **specify** the first one:

* they enjoin us to keep **God's name holy**,
* and to keep **the Lord's Day** holy too.
* These are other ways to **show and grow** our gratitude to God, acknowledging that he is **the source of all good things**.

The **Fourth** Commandment enjoins us to always be **grateful** to our **parents**, through whom God has given us so many **gifts**: life, education, faith...

Truly, the virtue of gratitude is at the **very core** of our spiritual lives.

Today, as Jesus **renews his gifts to** **us** in the Holy Eucharist, let's **promise** him that this week we will **unclog the pipeline of gratitude**, so that we can be **filled** with **lasting joy**.