

Sunday, October 13, 2019

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17

Responsorial: Psalm 98:1-4

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19

Growing in Faith from Those with a Different Perspective

Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God? (Luke 17:18)

Today's readings feature two foreigners suffering from leprosy: Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, and a man from Samaria. Both were miraculously healed by the God of Israel—Naaman, through the prophet Elisha, and the Samaritan, by Jesus. And both recognized it: Naaman pledged not to offer sacrifice “to any other god except to the Lord” (2 Kings 5:17), and the Samaritan was the only one of his company to return to thank Jesus (Luke 17:15). The stories contrast these foreigners' faith with the complacency of God's people.

These readings underscore the truth that God is the God of all the nations, not just of Israel. Even in the Old Testament, foreigners sometimes acknowledged Israel's God as their own. When Jesus was preaching in his hometown of Nazareth, he pointed out that God had chosen not the “insiders,” but Naaman and the widow in Zarephath to whom he sent his prophets (Luke 4:25-27). In a similar way, Jesus praised the faith of the Samaritan who returned to thank him. It seems that God sometimes uses outsiders to shake up the people on the inside who may have grown complacent about their faith.

God can still use people on the periphery to open our eyes and give us a different perspective. For example, a person who comes to Mass for the first time may have lots of questions. As someone who has been attending Mass for years, you might have taken such rituals and prayers for granted. But now you dig a little deeper to learn more about the liturgy. Or suppose you become friendly with a Christian from another tradition who isn't shy about praying with people. He might show you how to be bolder in prayer.

We can all benefit from a different perspective. So get to know people outside your normal circles. God just might have something important to show you through them.

“Jesus, thank you for all the people who help me to grow in my faith.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words: *Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy.* It continues with these words: *Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel . . . I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."*
 - Why do you think his healing caused Naaman to turn from false gods to the one true God and Lord?
 - Do you believe that God still heals today through the prayers of his people? Why or why not?
 - Were there any times when you were healed by God or witnessed God's healing? What impact did it have on you?
 - What are some areas in your life that still need to experience a deeper healing? What new steps can you take to bring these areas to the Lord for that deeper healing?
2. The response in the responsorial psalm is: *The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.* The responsorial psalm ends with these words: *The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands: break into song; sing praise.*
 - What do you think is the meaning of the Lord's *saving power*?
 - In what ways have you experienced the Lord's *saving power*? What was your response?
 - How would you describe the difference between the impact of God's healing power from the first reading and his *saving power* in the responsorial psalm? In what ways are their impact similar?
3. The second reading opens with these words: *Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal.* It ends with these words: *This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; 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.*
 - What do you think St. Paul meant by the opening words of the reading?
 - The ending words of the reading may have come from an early Christian hymn. What do you think these words mean? How do they apply to you personally?
4. In the Gospel reading, only one of the ten lepers who were healed came back, and he came back: *glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan.* The Gospel reading ends with these words: *Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."*
 - How does this story apply to you? For example, how often do you spend time in prayer praising and thanking God for the many blessings you have received and for saving you from sin and eternal separation from him?
 - What steps can you take to become more like the one leper who returned?
 - What do you think is the significance of Jesus' words to the leper who returned compared to what happened to the other lepers who did not return?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and these words: *Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God (Luke 17:18)?* It begins with these words: "Today's readings feature two foreigners suffering from leprosy: Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, and a man from Samaria. Both were miraculously healed by the God of Israel—Naaman, through the prophet Elisha, and the Samaritan, by Jesus. And both recognized it. . . . Both stories contrast these foreigners' faith with the complacency of God's people." It continues with these words: "It seems that God sometimes uses outsiders to shake up the people on the inside who may have grown complacent about their faith. God can still use people on the periphery to open our eyes and give us a different perspective." It ends with these words: "So get to know people outside your normal circles. God just might have something important to show you through them."
 - In what ways do the healings of Naaman and the Samaritan "contrast these foreigners' faith with the complacency of God's people"?
 - In what ways can God still "use people on the periphery to open our eyes and give us a different perspective"? Can you give examples from your own life?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for bringing people into your life that can challenge you, inspire you, and help you to grow in your faith. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, thank you for all the people who help me to grow in my faith."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry.]