

Thanksgiving Day Liturgy ~
23 November 2017 ~ 8:30 AM
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Sirach 50:22-24

- "And now, bless the God of all, who had done wondrous things on earth; . . . "

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 138 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

- "I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, . . . God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

GOSPEL:

LUKE 17:11-19

- "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."

i. Perhaps for many of us, this becomes a weekend of “remembering” “thanks” and “gratitude” . . . driven by this day . . . Thanksgiving Day . . . certainly driven, as well, by memories . . . of days gone by . . . of loved ones who are no longer with us . . . of women and men who may be serving in the military overseas or in other locations of our country and the world. In other words, perhaps the “thoughts” of thanksgiving and gratitude have become intertwined and gotten clouded by thoughts of how life has changed . . . how things are “missing”.

I will own that I have used this reflection before . . . but, as a good friend always reminds me, “You need to repeat something at least 7 times before you . . . or others . . . remember it.” So, consider my friend’s advice.

Some years ago, I came across a journal notation Thomas Merton had written. It reads, in part:

“that we are always thinking that our life will truly be happy “when.” We are not satisfied with what is currently our situation because we have it in our mind that our life won’t be happy until something else occurs: when I have one more thing I want, when I get rid of that personality flaw

of mine, when I can finally have life as I have always dreamed it to be, when I am truly successful, when I learn to pray better, when I find the right person in my life, when, when, when

. . . .

Waiting for the “when” keeps me from appreciating what I now have. Longing for promises and dreaming dreams is not a harmful deed as long as the present moment is not overlooked, as long as gratitude rises for what is already here, as long as I do not base my happiness on what is still wanting. Thankfulness for what has already been given is the foundation for hoping for what is not yet.

Today I am going to put aside my “when this happens” and my “if only this could be” and my “when things get better” and my “as soon as I have this.” I am going to harvest what I now have, gather all the many gifts that are already mine. I am going to observe what has been placed in the granary of my heart and marvel at the abundance.

I will stand before this heap of blessings and take a long, grateful look. I will say farewell to my “when” and be thankful for what is.”

I think it is often times, so very, very human to **not** be able to realize or recognize the blessings in our lives . . . how God has blessed us . . . especially if we are in pain . . . hungry . . . struggling with managing family and finances . . . grieving a loss

Perhaps, it is also part of the human condition, at times, to have been caught in the pain of anger or despair for so long that when the reason for the anger or the despair is no longer around, it is difficult to behave another way to see and experience that the burden has been lifted.

ii. Each time I hear this Gospel passage from Luke, I want to believe that the other nine just did not realize they had been healed. I want to believe that they were not insensitive nor ungrateful . . . rather, that they just had been lepers for so long . . . alienated from the community for so long . . . forced to live in the worst of conditions for so long, that perhaps they just did not know that life could be different . . . perhaps, even, those who had done the alienating . . . those who had forced them to live in less than human conditions did not treat them any differently, so, as a result, while there may have been physical healing . . . the healing of the attitudes of others had not taken place.

iii. Merton's "journal entry" is a reminder that life is not about living and enjoying only when all of "our" conditions are in place . . . only when everything is in good, working order, but now . . . and it is in the now that God blesses us . . . it is from the experience of God's blessings now that hearts and minds and souls and bodies are moved to reach out to help others experience the blessings of God in the now . . .

Merton's "journal entry" is also a reminder that the work God does is not about convenience . . . but about passion, care and love. God does not love us only when it is easy, but continually. God does not care for us only when there is time, but eternally. God does not bless us, only when we are in need, but always.

The "when" of our lives is now . . . "now" is the time for thanksgiving. "Now" is the time to be grateful, for all that God has done, continues to do and will always do, in Christ, and through the Spirit . . . grateful now for all that God has created and given.