

Homily 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

A priest, visiting a remote village chapel, delivered a 30-minute sermon on “Gratitude.” At the conclusion of the sermon, he said, “And remember, however small the gift, always be grateful to the Lord.”

Later, when it was time for the collection, an usher used the preacher’s hat to take up the offering.

When the hat came back to him, the priest shook it carefully, but heard no sound. Then he turned it upside down. But nothing came out. It was EMPTY!

Seeing this, every eye in the congregation watched to see if the priest would practice what he had just preached. Whereupon, the clergyman raised his hands to heaven, still holding the empty hat, and said, “I thank Thee Lord that, at least, I got back my hat!”

The theme of our readings for the 28th Sunday of the year is gratefulness. This virtue is exemplified by the grateful Naaman who was cured of his leprosy (2 Kgs 5:14) and the Samaritan leper (Lk 17:18) who were the recipients of God’s goodness.

Somebody rightly said, “Gratitude is memory of the heart.” Ingrates have no memories, no remembrances.

Is it any wonder that our Lord in the gospel got disappointed when, out of the 10 recipients of His good act, only one returned to say “thank you”? “There were

10 made clean; where are the other nine?” And this was even a Samaritan, a foreigner (Lk 17,18).

Are we grateful people? Just think of our prayers to God. Aren't they almost all prayers of petition, “gimme, gimme Lord”?

Prayers of petition are all right. I myself pray a lot of these! But do you also say prayers of thanks to God? Have you thanked God for what you already have, like the gifts of life, health, or some talent, which you take for granted as absolutely yours? Or the free gifts of Nature like the air, sunlight, water, plants?

Are you grateful also for misfortunes and bad experiences like that priest in the opening story?

Bishop Teodoro Bacani narrates a story of a boy who wrote a letter to his mother. It was said like this:

Dear Mama. This morning I cleaned our lawn that will cost you twenty dollars. After lunch, I washed the plates and utensils that was worth thirty dollars. This afternoon, you asked me to buy some items in the grocery, since the sun was hot and the grocery store was far, I would charge you fifty dollars. One hundred dollars is the total money you owe me. Signed: Your Obedient Son.

The mother wrote back. Dear Son. I carried you in my womb for nine months I charged you nothing. I had a hard time giving birth to you that I almost died I

**charged you nothing. When you were two years old you got sick and I was not able to sleep for three days caring for you but I did not charge you anything. All in all you owe me nothing because I love you. Signed:
Your Loving Mother.**

We can say that this little boy was ungrateful. He did not give thanks to his mother for everything that his mother did to him. This is just simply a story but it can happen to us concretely.

I am wondering too why it is very easy for those who are far from us, the foreigner, to say “Thank you” but it very difficult for those who are near to us, our closed relatives and friends to say so.

Just like the story of today’s gospel, ten lepers ask Jesus to cure them of their disease but, Jesus is so sad, that only one person, a Samaritan, go back to Jesus to thank Him. The other nine, they were Jews, do not. Where are they? They run away with their blessing and forget the source of their blessing. And another reason why the nine do not come back because they pride themselves as the chosen people of God and for them God has an obligation for them. So, there is no need for them to give Jesus thanks.

How about us, do we really give thanks to God if we are blessed with good health, good spouse, good parents and children, material possessions? Of course let us rejoice with our gifts but don’t forget the

giver of our gifts, God Himself. The problem with many of us is: we go back to the Giver of gifts only when we ask for another blessing. We go back not to show our gratitude but to complain.

It is not very difficult to say, “Thank You” to God and to those people who have done good to us or helped us in our needs. Saying this would not only help ourselves ease of the burdens but also the people who heard it can help them forget for the meantime their own hardships too. It could inspire us to be in love. Are we grateful people? Are we able to say, “thank you, Lord’ in both good times and bad times?

Look, my dear friends, at the crucifix and we can see the shortest and the best prayers for all times. What letter of the alphabet do you see in the form of the cross, a letter ‘T’, right? And what letter of the alphabet do you see in the form of the Body of Christ, a letter ‘Y’, right? If we combine the two letters, we can have TY which means Thank You which is the shortest and the best prayer for all times. Every time we look at the crucifix, just say “Thank You” and you have said the best prayer of all.