

Homily. 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 8/9 October 2022.

There are 2 streams running through the readings we've just heard. The 1st is all about our God of surprises and what God does for us. This is the God who makes the universe from nothing with no help from us; the God who asks us with all of our faults to be partners with Him in developing, sharing and protecting creation. It's about the God who never ceases to surprise us, bringing life into lifeless wombs, giving healing and hope to those who are sick and outcast and who even raises the dead from their graves, something unheard of since time began.

This God, our God, keeps doing all of this for us if we will only ask with an open mind and a trusting heart, staying alert for the signs of God's action on our behalf. This is the God who unexpectedly healed Naaman the leper from Syria, a foreigner and pagan and who, working in and through Jesus, surprisingly healed the 10 lepers cast out beyond the walls of a town He was entering. The other surprise in this story is that only one of the healed came back to say thank you, a Samaritan man, an outsider thought by the Jews of his day to be a heretic and traitor to their cause.

This leads us to the 2nd stream, a message which has to do with our response to God surprising gifts and work for us. Naaman offered the Prophet Elisha a gift. The Prophet refused for he knew he was merely and instrument of God's work and not the worker. Naaman, taking soil from the land of this holy healing God, promised to worship only the God of Israel from that time forth. Centuries later the Samaritan knelt before Jesus in humble thanksgiving for what the Lord had done for him. The Samaritan recognised God and grace at work in and through Jesus. Meanwhile we learn that the other 9 went on their merry way without so

much as a backwards glance. They simply saw themselves, a bit like people filling up their car with petrol as simply as taking the service offered without any thought or thanks for either the gift or the Giver.

In every Mass the Eucharistic Prayer begins by asking us to lift up our hearts, inviting us to give thanks to the Lord our God. We reply that it is right and just to do so. Then the Priest says that indeed it is truly right and just, both our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give God thanks and praise. He then prays for us in thanks for what God has done and is doing for us especially through the words and work of Jesus Christ, for its God initiative on our behalf that matters first of all and above all.

But what of that 2nd stream, our response? Are we really thankful for Gods deeds like Naaman and the Samaritan? Or are we just cruising through this celebration and ritual like people who drive up to and then away from a petrol pump, with appreciation or care? I suggest that we need to come through these front doors with reasons for thankfulness and gratitude in our minds. Then we can add and offer them to Our Lord from our hearts, our own sacrifice of thanksgiving, a gift from our lives and our personal faith that truly pleases God, joining us to Christ's offering.

So, a little more awareness of what God does daily for us along with a thankful heart for God's many small and not so small gifts will fire our liturgy with life. Then, as is God's way with us, we'll be surprised again and uplifted up by the powerful fuel of divine gratitude and hope in ways we never knew about or thought we could ever experience.