

Reflections on Gospel Readings for Sundays and Feast Days

October Archive

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C – Luke 17, 5-10

Aren't I like Habakkuk sometimes? OK, let's be honest, quite often? Full of grievances of not being heard, or others not being treated as I would see fit? Aren't we all like that at times? So quick to judge, so quick to demand from others, from God...

And what's God's response to that prophet? What is His expectation? To be faithful and patient. Simple, one would say but then why so difficult to achieve?

And then we hear the Gospel, which complements with the first reading. But is it really what we would like to hear? „We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.“ Further more, are we ready to say that?

The Gospel is beautiful as springtime but tough as a cross. And we are here to live it!

Fr Chris CFMD

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 17, 11-19

Every Sunday we gather together for the Eucharist. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving and this is certainly reflected in the first reading and gospel this Sunday.

In the first reading, Naaman on being cured of leprosy believes in the true God and is very grateful to the prophet, Elisha. In the gospel reading Jesus cured the ten lepers and yet only one returned to thank him.

Naaman was a commander in the Syrian army and was also a gentile. He lavishes praise on Elisha who refuses to take it as it was God who cured him.

This leads into the gospel reading where of the 10 who were cured only one returns, a Samaritan, to thank him, 'Were not all ten men made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no-one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner. He said to the man, stand up and go your way. Your faith has saved you.' The parable of the Good Samaritan also demonstrates the compassion of the Samaritan who stops to tend the wounds of an injured man who was ignored by a Levite and a Jewish priest.

Certainly, the Jews and Samaritans are no friends but this act of thankfulness by the Samaritan

demonstrates his faith. We see later in Acts (8:1-25) of the reception they give the Good News.

If you remember when Jesus was in the synagogue at Nazareth, he said he had come to save the gentiles too and we know that Christianity was to spread throughout the world.

Giving thanks to God is at the heart of our faith, thanks for the ultimate sacrifice that we may be freed from sin, a new covenant between God and people.

I remember during a retreat, the priest said during the Eucharist celebration at the beginning of the Eucharist prayer, 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God' and we replied, 'It is right and just'. He then said what do have we to be thankful for? Those present where stopped in their tracks from assuming we would go directly to the preface. We had to think for a moment and name what we had to be thankful for: relationships; family; life; good health; the present moment and the community here present.

That was many years ago but from that point on I did reflect more on what I had to be thankful for rather than just paying lip service to the words. In both scripture passages, dramatic events occur in order for people to be thankful, well for those who returned to give thanks.

I suspect the reverse is true for most people. What have I to be thankful for? I don't have this and I don't have that. Its almost like something dramatic needs to happen before we can be thankful. This is when selfishness creeps in. We forgot to be thankful for what is happening in our lives, thankful for what we have.

It is with sadness we have replaced thankfulness with selfishness and taking things for granted which comes at a cost. We see this from the cries of young people who say we are robbing them of their time on this planet as we plunder the resources and how it is having an impact. Be thankful for the earth and pray for its recovery.

It is with sadness we have replaced thankfulness with selfishness and retreated into silos were equality does not matter and we treat people differently. Be thankful for the diversity of the earth and pray for equality.

It is with sadness that we continue to conquer and divide, moving backwards rather than forwards for greater unity for the benefit of peace and harmony. Be thankful for the peacemakers and pray for unity.

Let us return to our Lord to give thanks for our past, our present and hope for our future. **Amen.**

Father Tosh Lynch

Saint Mungo's Mission, Glasgow

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Luke 18, 1-8

This wonderful passage begins with the invitation from Jesus to Matthew to follow him, imitate, learn from. Nowhere does Jesus say worship. Jesus then gives us an example of how to follow him...to meet and eat with people considered outsiders from the establishment.

Jesus says "I require mercy not sacrifice" implying that mercy should 'trump' the Law in all its narrowness. Jesus places himself teasingly between the establishment and those the establishment excludes. Tantalisingly Jesus states "it's not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick."

All of us are 'sick' and in need of the mercy of God. All of us are made in the image of God. Everyone is totally unworthy and yet everyone is so totally worthy. God never excludes but includes all.

Fr. Nick Young, St Gabriels, Liverpool

30th Sunday / Ordinary Time, Luke 18, 9-14

Our Gospel story this week is about two Jewish men who went into the Temple in Jerusalem to pray. St Luke tells us right away to whom Jesus is telling this parable. "He spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

We may wonder who these certain ones were. Probably ordinary people like you and me who had gathered around to hear Jesus speak. Perhaps there were some Pharisees and religious leaders scattered throughout the crowd. Perhaps also there were publicans and other outcasts of society. In his story Jesus picks out two distinctly different characters to illustrate his point – the Pharisee and the Publican (some translations say tax collector), examples of whom may have been among his listeners. The Pharisees represented the perfect Jewish religious model up to whom everyone looked, whereas tax collectors represented the worst model of a sinner. They were Jews who were given certain freedoms and privileges by the Romans for doing the dirty work and they did it generally in a dirty way. Both the Jews and the Romans despised them because of the way they extorted money from people. In his story, Jesus paints a caricature of the traits commonly associated with both figures.

The Pharisee begins by thanking God – so far, so good. However, he does not thank God for all that he has, but for all that he is. “God I thank thee that I am not as other men are”. Well, there’s nothing wrong with that either. We are all uniquely and wonderfully made. But he doesn’t stop there – he compares himself with others at their expense – “extortioners, unjust, or even as this publican.” Then, he goes on to tell God how good he is. “I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” This is a perfect example of how it is possible to be completely right and at the same time, completely wrong!

The publican by contrast stands afar off with his head bowed down in humility. His prayer is quite different. He doesn’t think he is even worthy enough to look up to heaven. He beats his breast and says, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” It was the publican, despite all his sin, rather than the Pharisee, despite all his righteousness, who went home justified before God. A perfect example of how it is possible to be completely wrong, and at the same time completely right! Or, as Jesus sums this up, “Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Christian teachers throughout the centuries have warned against this essential vice, the utmost evil, pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, are mere trifles in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice and is the complete anti-God state of mind. Those who would point out the mote in the eye of another without noticing the beam in their own eye have spiritual pride. Those who would have stoned the woman caught in adultery have spiritual pride.

We need to understand, though, that a reasonable view of ourselves is not pride, and pleasure in being praised is not pride. But we also need to acknowledge that the praise is due to our creator, not ourselves, and be thankful for, not proud of, our God-given talents!

Fr Julian Kent CFMD