

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

All ten lepers were healed externally, but only one was saved by his faith. Only the Samaritan returned and met the saviour after his miraculous healing. For the others, Jesus was only a healer or a miracle worker, but the Samaritan who returned understood the presence of God in Jesus. He experienced not only the outer, bodily healing but also an inner healing. It is through inner healing that helps us to return to the Divine; it opens our heart beyond the worldly realm to God and Salvation.

Similarly, in the First Reading, when Naaman the Syrian was healed, he said: “There is no God in all the earth except in Israel.” His humility led him into a deep spiritual understanding. When we read the story of Naaman’s healing, he is initially presented as a man who was full of pride. When the Prophet Elisha was not ready to attend to him in person to perform a miracle, as he was expecting, but instead was asked by the prophet to immerse himself in the river Jordan seven times, he felt anger, rage, and wanted to leave, as recounted in 2 Kings 5:11: “But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!” No one will ever understand the way and the plan of God while bearing a prideful heart. Anyway, thank God Naaman had a wise servant who advised him to do the little action proposed by the prophet Elisha, and he went and immersed himself in the Jordan seven times and was healed of his leprosy. Not only was he cured of leprosy, but it also opened his heart to see and understand God.

Understanding the presence of God in our lives is the most profound part of our spiritual journey. As we are celebrate Thanksgiving, let us thank and love our God who provides us with the abundance of goodness and grace.

What keeps us away from experiencing God? From the story of Naaman’s healing, we gather that it is pride that hinders us from experiencing God and His plans. Some biblical



commentators speculated as to why the nine healed lepers didn't return to thank Jesus. They surmised that the nine focused only on their own selves, their own lives; ruled by pride and prioritizing ritual over a true relationship with the healer. Sirach 10:13 draws our attention to the sinfulness of pride: "Pride is the beginning of sin." Even tradition holds that Satan's fall was due to his prideful defiance (Isaiah 14:13-14). Both St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great named pride as the primary and chief deadly sin because it demonstrates the rejection of God's order in favour of self-rule. St. Thomas Aquinas identified pride as the "queen of all vices" calling it a "satanic" quality that attempts to withdraw one from being subject to God. This is summarised and reinforced in the CCC §1866:

Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called "capital" because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia.

St. Augustine observed: "Other sins find their vent in the accomplishment of evil deeds, whereas pride lies in wait for good deeds, to destroy them."

How does pride affect spiritual life?

Pride blinds the soul, shutting out God's grace with self-reliance. It strangles prayer, as the proud see no need for help. The Church warns that it builds a wall against repentance and receiving the Sacrament of the Reconciliation. It breeds contempt, isolating us from love. Only humility can pierce its armour. Heaven and salvation begins in our hearts whenever we say no to pride and other sins, and a 'yes' to God and His plan.