

Thanksgiving. 07

1. We read this section of Luke's Gospel just a little over a month ago, to be exact, on the 14th of October. But clearly we had to reread it today when we celebrate this feast of Thanksgiving because its theme is so obviously that of giving thanks. Jesus remarks here that it is the foreigner, not his fellow-Jews, who knew enough to return to thank him for his cure. Perhaps the others came from broken families. Perhaps they had not been taught to say thank-you. The foreigner, on the other hand, must have come from a good family. He had been taught to say thank-you.

2. Perhaps not all of us had good parents who taught us to say thank you, although I doubt that, but all of us have been taught as Catholics to say thank-you to God. Christianity is one long thank-you to God for his gifts to us: creation first of all (the simple gift of our lives) and redemption (our being called in Jesus to be the adopted children of God). Our major prayer is an act of thanksgiving. That is what the word Eucharist means. We are a Eucharistic people, a Eucharistic church. Everything culminates for us in the Mass, which is our act of thanks to God for Jesus' life and death among us. Therefore the attitude we assume in prayer, in

the celebration of the Eucharist, should begin to permeate all of our lives. We should become quite simply grateful people.

3. In the order of Grace the great gift for which we have to be thankful is the gift of eternal life. In Jesus we are promised this new kind of life. And this promise should change the way we see everything here and now. It should make us aware of the fact that everything we have is gift. Our lives are gifts. Our health is a gift, a fact which we sometimes only recognize when it is taken away from us. Our friends are gifts. Our minds and hearts are gifts. All is gift. Therefore, let us give thanks.

4. And when we look at the circumstances of our lives, we see more gifts. Look at how some people in the world have to live: without food, without housing, with governments that kill and torture them. Look at all the people who suffer exile or unjust imprisonment. Look at the people who suffer natural disasters like that in Bangladesh this past week. We have escaped so many of these trials and losses. And so we should give thanks to God for these many gifts: that we have been able to live in a peaceful and prosperous part of the world, that we have escaped or survived war, that we have so many material comforts: clean water, electricity, heat in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer,

and food at our fingertips. In fact, we have to admit the fact that when compared to most other people in the world, we are the privileged. Let us not become spoiled children. Let us not take all these gifts for granted. Let us be grateful; let us be thankful. And let us also be aware of the obligation which our having all these privileges, these advantages, places on us, namely, that we share what we have with others, that we serve them with our gifts. In a word, let us be like the foreigner who knew enough to return to Jesus to say thank-you.

Lord, on this Thanksgiving Day we remember with love all those who have gone before us. Please mention your parents and grandparent, aunt and uncles.

We pray especially for Rob Nelson and his wife.

We pray for ourselves, that we may live grateful lives, thanking God for our families, our gifts of mind and heart and body.

We pray also that we may grow in the awareness of our world and all the people who in it who suffer injustice in its many forms: hunger, torture, lack of housing and education, lack of political and personal freedom. Lord, help us to help them.

We pray for our nation, that it may live up to its ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all its citizens, and that it may be a beacon of hope for all the world, turning its back on the way of war and torture and xenophobia.

We pray all this in the name of our Lord JC, who is our life, our hope, and our love.