

Father O'Connor's Homily for 12 October 2025
Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Sunday – C

2 Kings 5: 14-17
2 Timothy 2: 8-13
Luke 17: 11-19

“In all circumstances, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” [1 Thessalonians 5: 18].

Do you know where you just heard that line? This was the verse that was chanted between the “Alleluias” that we just sang before the Gospel. And it is from Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. “In all circumstances, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”

Our secular world proclaims another message all the time, and it is a lie: “The more power, wealth, property and stuff that you have, the happier you will be.”

Jesus teaches us quite differently: “The more grateful you are for all the blessings that God has given you, the happier you will be.”

Today’s Gospel lays out this lesson.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and meets ten lepers. One is a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews.

The lepers cry out, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” And Jesus does. He says to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” On their way there, they were all healed.

Then what? Nine of them continued on their merry way. Only one of them – the Samaritan – came back to thank Jesus. And Jesus says, “Where are the other nine? Has no one but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

This is the only time in the Gospels where Jesus ever demands thanks. All the rest of the time He leaves that act of graciousness up to us.

The lesson? Only I can make the decision to be grateful. No one can do this for me – or for you. And a grateful heart makes for a happier person.

The writer Fulton Oursler [1893-1952] was an agnostic before he became a Catholic at the age of 50. Then, astounded by how little people knew about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, he wrote his now-classic book, **The Greatest Story Ever Told** [1949].

In another piece of his writing, Oursler tells about an African-American woman who helped to raise him when he was a child. As a non-believing youth he used to mock her faith. Before every meal she would bow her head and pray, “Much obliged, Lord, for this fine food.”

One day he said to her, “The food is going to be there whether you pray or not. So why bother?”

She answered, “Food always tastes better when you have a grateful heart.” She went on, “When I was a little girl there was an old preacher who taught me a very important lesson. He said, ‘Every single day, look for God’s blessings, and thank God for them. If you look for those blessings every day, you will indeed find them.’”

And then she added, “But this morning, when I was sitting on the edge of my bed, I couldn’t think of a single thing to thank God for. I thought and I thought... And then, from underneath my bedroom door, came the aroma of coffee brewing in the kitchen. And I said, ‘Much obliged, Lord, for the coffee. And much obliged for its fine smell.’”

Years later the woman was dying. And Fulton Oursler and some others were at her bedside. Fulton thought, “I wonder what she’ll find to be grateful for today.” The woman opened her eyes and looked around. She smiled and said, “Much obliged, Lord, for such fine friends!”

How was she able to do this? Every day she looked for God’s blessings in her life. And every day she found them, to the day she died – because she had a grateful heart. And she was a very happy person.

Stewardship as a way of life is all about becoming an even better disciple of Jesus each day – and, looking for God’s blessings with a grateful heart, to be a happier person.

Here are some lines from Henry Ward Beecher [1813-1887]: “If someone should give me a dish of sand and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them.

“But let me take a magnet and sweep through the dish, and it would draw to itself all the particles of iron by the power of attraction.

“The ungrateful heart, like my fingers in the sand, discovers no mercies. But let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds iron, so it will find some blessings in every single hour. Only the iron in God’s sand is pure gold.”

“In all circumstances, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”

On this Sunday, I encourage you to leave your worries here with the Lord. Be grateful for the blessings that you have, and not regretful for the ones that you wish you had.

I invite each of you, during this Mass, this Eucharist, this supreme prayer of thanksgiving to God, to recall a blessing or two that you are especially grateful for today.

And tell Him from your heart, “Thank you, Lord. I am much obliged for all of your fine blessings.”