

Dear Brothers and Sisters



*"...and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him".*

Although ten lepers were cleansed, only one returned to give thanks.

As kids we are taught to say 'please' and 'thank you', but those words can easily be lost in the adult vocabulary. For one thing, a sense of entitlement can preclude the need for them. Asking permission and expressing gratitude is

for the weak, those lower down on the rung of life. Those who have made it, or are making it in life, have only themselves to thank; or so they think.

Lack of gratitude is false, a manifestation of pride; that awful foe, which appropriates everything for itself, making the "I" the center of relationships, family, work, church, school, college, retirement. The attitude of thanksgiving is lost. It's not surprising that the other nine in today's Gospel do not say thank you. When they were in need they went running to Jesus, but once healed he becomes a distant memory.

Jesus himself once gave thanks thus: 'I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to the mere children'. Wisdom and learning are here synonymous for self importance, entitlement, arrogance. A thief lives this way, taking what is not his and appropriating it for self: possessions, time, relationships. The thief does not say 'thank you', he simply takes what does not belong to him. There is no one to thank but "I".

This is juxtaposed by the attitude of the mere children, who are grateful for everything. The children Jesus refers to are his disciples: you and me. Children are grateful for everything. Give a kid a bucket of water and you'd think he'd died and gone to heaven, he's so happy. Give a little girl a flower, or a ladybug, and she's happier than someone who hits the lottery. A child will be happy, ecstatic, and thankful even with a pool of mud, or a pile of leaves, or a coloring book.

There is only one way in which we can truly express thanks. There is only one person who can cause thanksgiving to arise from within us, and that is Jesus himself. He is the small one, the little child who guides us, opening a way for us.

Fr. Sean