

Wednesday 32nd in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 17,11-19): On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was passing along the border between Samaria and Galilee, and as He entered a village, ten lepers came to meet him. Keeping their distance, they called to him, «Jesus, Master, have pity on us!». Then Jesus said to them, «Go and show yourselves to the priests». Now, as they went their way, they found they were cured.

One of them, as soon as he saw he was cleansed, turned back praising God in a loud voice, and throwing himself on his face before Jesus, he gave him thanks. This man was a Samaritan. «Was no one found to return and give praise to God but this alien?». And Jesus said to him, «Stand up and go your way; your faith has saved you».

«Throwing himself on his face before Jesus, he gave him thanks»

Fr. Conrad J. MARTÍ i Martí OFM
(Valldoreix, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Jesus passes by close to us so that we can actually relive the above mentioned passage in the shape of so many people relegated to an outer edge by our society, and who look at us Christians as their only possibility to find Jesus' love and goodness. In the days of the Lord, lepers were totally marginalized. In fact, those ten lepers met Jesus «as He entered a village» (Lk 17:12), as they were not allowed in the villages, nor could they get any close to people («keeping their distance, they called to him»).

With some imagination, each one of us can reproduce the image of those outcasts in our own society, who also have names and surnames, like we do: immigrants, drug addicts, wrongdoers, AIDS victims, unemployed, destitute... Jesus wants to heal them, to remedy their suffering, to solve their problems; and He expects our unselfish, free, efficient collaboration... for love.

We can also assume Jesus' lesson for us. For we are sinners and in need of forgiveness, we are beggars who depend totally on him. Would we be able to say like the leper «Jesus, Master, have pity on me!» (cf. Lk 17:13)? Do we know how to turn to Jesus with a profound and confident prayer?

Do we imitate the cleansed leper that goes back to Jesus thanking him out loud? In fact, only «one of them, as soon as he saw he was cleansed, turned back praising God in a loud voice» (Lk 17:15). Jesus finds the other nine missing: «Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?» (Lk 17:17). St. Augustine gave the following sentence: «'Thanks God!': nothing shorter can be said (...) or made more efficiently than with these words». Accordingly, how do we thank God for the great gift of our life, and that of our family; for the grace of the faith, the Holy Eucharist, the forgiveness of sins...? Is it not true that quite often we do not thank him for the Eucharist, even though we may be frequently participating of it? The Eucharist is, no doubt, our best daily experience.