

New Brighton, Sunday 27th August 2023

13th Sunday after Pentecost

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

“Has no one been found to return and give glory to God, except this foreigner?”¹

With this question, left without answer, Jesus acknowledged and praised the thanksgiving move of the tenth leper, who came back to Him, before going to the priests of the Temple, as written in Moses' law. Even 2000 years ago, men were already suffering of this great plague of ingratitude, and Jesus is attracting our attention upon it this morning. As we are living in a more and more secularised world, who is denying God's rights upon His Creation and especially mankind, the gesture of gratitude, one of the first actions lead by Charity, is getting lost, and unfortunately also amongst Christian people.

The Gospel of this 13th Sunday after Pentecost offers to our meditation the opposition between the nine lepers and the tenth: the nine who took for granted their healing, and went their way, and the tenth, who came back to glorify God.

We received everything from Our Lord, with no merits on our account. How often do we receive these graces, without thinking about what we are truly receiving? How often do we come to the confessional to fully only a duty, but without any real firm purpose of amendment? How often do we come at the Sacred Banquet of Communion, without being well prepared, because of our distractions, or just macinal habits? And worse than all that: how often do we receive these blessing, and forget to thank our Lord for the graces just received?

Are we amongst the nine lepers or are we the tenth one? Our weekly Sunday mass does not only fulfil the 3rd Commandment of God and the 1st Commandment of the Church. But it should also make us looking like this tenth leper, the Samaritan.

“In today's Gospel, there is a beautiful allusion to the Eucharist: "Praising God with a loud voice, he fell on his face and thanked him" (eucharistôn autô) Eucharist means thanksgiving. The Sunday Mass is an office of thanksgiving: those who are privileged by grace thank God for having healed them of the leprosy of sin. May we see in this image the meaning of the Sunday service! Sunday is the day when we must praise God out loud, thanking him for the grace of baptism. At the same time, it is a day of maturity for our soul, in which it receives: "growth in faith, hope and love" (Collect), "growth in eternal redemption" (Postc.).

This makes us understand the Gospel. In this stranger, the only one of the ten lepers to recognise himself, we recognise ourselves, those of us who come to Mass today. Today the Lord "enters the castle" of the Church; we "go out to

¹ Luke, XVII, 18. 13th Sunday after Pentecost.

meet him" and he heals us of the leprosy of sin; he wants to give us new graces in the Holy Sacrifice and in Holy Communion."²

Our entire life should only be a thanksgiving to God, because we received everything from his bounty, and first before all, the grace of divine life. Our day is even more structured if we have a look to the antiphons of the breviary for today:

"In the spirit of the Church, we must do more than just read the Gospel at Mass; we must live it throughout the day. In the morning until midday [at the office of Lauds, the second of the day], Jesus comes to the Church's castle, and we, the lepers, go to meet him: "Jesus came to a castle, and ten lepers went to meet him. They stood at a distance and cried out loudly: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Ant. Ben.). In the evening, [at the office of Vespers, the second before last of the day], we thank him for the healing: "When one of them saw that he was healed, he turned back and praised God with a loud voice, Alleluia". We then sing the Magnificat in thanksgiving."³

Do not look like the nine lepers who ignored their benefactor. Come to the Lord, and if you find yourself with nothing to thank Him for, offer yourself as an oblation to be united to his suffering, and expiate for those who do not say thank you.

"The Samaritan, the despised gentile, whose sufferings have given him that humility which makes the sinner clear-sighted, is the only one who recognises God by his divine works, and gives him thanks for his favours. How many ages of apparent abandonment, of humiliation and suffering, must pass over [us] too, before [we] will recognise and adore [our] God, and confess to him [our] sins, and give him [our] devoted love, and, like this stranger, hear Jesus pronounce [our] pardon, and say: Arise ! Go thy way! thy faith hath made thee whole and saved thee!"⁴

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

² Dom Pius Parsch, le guide dans l'année liturgique, 13th Sunday after Pentecost. Translated with www.deepl.com.

³ Dom Pius Parsch, le guide dans l'année liturgique, 13th Sunday after Pentecost. Translated with www.deepl.com.

⁴ Dom Guéranger, The Liturgical Year, 13th Sunday after Pentecost.