



October 13, 2019

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

"Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Luke 17:18

Dear Friends;

A young boy was standing on a pier during a storm. A rogue wave came up and swept the boy into the sea. An older sailor heedless of the danger to himself, dove into the stormy water, struggled with the boy, and finally, exhausted brought him to safety. Two days later the mother of the boy came with the youngster to the same pier, seeking the sailor who had saved her son. Finding him, she asked, "You dove into the ocean to bring my boy out?" "I did," he replied. The mother quickly demanded, "Then where's his hat?"

Giving thanks nourishes our spirits and makes us less entitled and needy. We too often see what's wrong with the world than what is right. To be thankful is a good place to start to cure our wanton negativity. One of the strange ironies of our society, that is blessed with so much, is we develop an attitude that we are owed. Our consumer culture cultivates a sense of dissatisfaction in us. We are made to feel less than what we are so the economic powers can sell us more. And when we get it we are still not happy.

We can let petty concerns get in the way of what matters. In the constant accumulation of more stuff we can lose a sense of gratitude for life, health, family, friends, neighbors and community. Sometimes a loss of a job, or an illness or some other misfortune can make us realize for what we truly should be grateful. In our reading from 2 Kings Naaman was a powerful general but he was afflicted with a skin disease and could find no relief in his own country. So he seeks out the Prophet Elisha in the land of Israel. The ten lepers call out to Jesus to restore them to the life of the community. Naaman and the ten lepers knew what really mattered—community.

Ancient Israel was concerned with boundaries. Who was in who was out. The word for "holy" in Hebrew means "to be set apart." The Torah said, Israel your God is Holy—set apart from all other gods. You are the people of God so you too are set apart from all other people. So boundaries defined who was set apart, who was holy. Non-Jews were not holy. Any physical imperfections challenged your status as holy and your relationship to family, God and the community.

Skin is the boundary between the physical person and the community. The leprosy that is spoken of in the bible is not Hansen's disease like we saw on the island of Molokai. From the description it was most probably a serious form of psoriasis. It speaks of sores and dry flaky skin that was shed on furniture, bedding and floors. It was an illness that makes the boundary of the skin permeable. And that was abhorrent to the ancient Israelites. Therefore those so afflicted had to remove themselves from the community. They were cut off. They could not be with family, they could not interact with society and they could not pray (because they were ritually impure).

What Elisha does for Naaman the Syrian general, and Jesus do for the ten lepers is they restore those lepers to the life of community. But in addition to this Jesus crosses and heals another boundary.

In the culture of Jesus, like many other cultures, you do not say "thank you." The cultural truism is "don't thank me you will return the favor when I am in need." You say thank you only when you cannot return the favor. This is the case with the Samaritan leper who returns. He returns because he knows as a Samaritan he will not be allowed into the Temple. The other nine Jewish lepers will be able to return to Jesus for healing if their condition returns. The Samaritan will not be able to do so. The Samaritan knew that he was in the "wrong" place at the "right" time. Such an opportunity may never come again. The only thing is to thank Jesus. And what Jesus does is to receive him, Samaritan, into the community of his followers. The only boundary that will "set apart" the followers of Jesus is the quality of their inclusive love.

"O Lord, that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness"—Wm. Shakespeare

Peace,

Fr Ron



Queridos amigos;

Septiembre 13, 2015

Vigésimo Cuarto Domingo en Tiempo Ordinario

...*"Quien dicen que soy yo?"* Marcos: 8: 27

En Julio, en un artículo de opinión, Joe Mathews habla de la obsesión de nuestra cultura con los súper héroes (*nuestra obsesión con los superhéroes evita verdades incómodas*, SF Chronicle; 26 de julio de 2015). Más allá de la saturación de películas, *"los superhéroes y nuestro deseo de esperar a uno para que nos salve el día, han invadido nuestra cultura, nuestra industria, nuestra política y nuestras escuelas."* Él describe cómo estamos siempre buscando algún superhéroe ya sea en los negocios, política o educación: Elan Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, un Schwarzenegger (que tenía super poderes en la película) o un Jerry Brown (que algunos llaman Gandolf de "Señor de los anillos"), etc..

Queremos a un superhéroe para rescatarnos, ser nuestro portavoz o nos decirnos la acción que debemos tomar. Mathews afirma que *"dada nuestra sensación colectiva de impotencia en una época de estancamiento y desigualdad, nuestra devoción a los superhéroes es comprensible. Pero es una manera de evitar la incómoda verdad que el progreso, en cualquier lugar, requiere reunir muchas personas detrás de un objetivo común."*

En el pasaje de hoy del Evangelio de Marcos, Jesús pregunta a sus discípulos: "¿quién dicen que soy yo?" Esto no es un examen de catecismo. Jesús se da cuenta de que el, como nosotros, solo puede entender nuestra identidad personal en relación a los demás, especialmente con aquellos que amamos. Esta pregunta viene después de que Jesús ha alimentado a 4 mil, sanó a un sordomudo, los fariseos desafían su honor y sana a un ciego. Los discípulos responden que la gente no está segura. La gente dice que es un sanador y trabajador de maravillas, o un profeta, o Juan Bautista que vuelve de entre los muertos.

Entonces Jesús hace la pregunta más profunda, "¿quién dicen que soy yo?" Pedro responde. En todo lo que hemos visto que haces vemos la mano de Dios, "tú eres el Cristo," el ungido. Entonces Jesús define lo que significa. Él ha venido a proclamar el Reino de Dios que se revela en amor radicalmente no-violenta y de auto-entrega. Él debe dar su vida para poder ser levantado. Pedro discute con Jesús. Él quería un superhéroe que cuidaría de la pobreza y la política. En cambio, Jesús está invitando a él (y a nosotros) a la obra dolorosa de matar a nuestro ego (la Cruz) para todos poder estar detrás de el objetivo común de anunciar el Reino de Dios.

La buena noticia de Jesús es la reconciliación y la renovación de todas las relaciones. A través de la muerte salvadora de Cristo el ciclo de las relaciones fragmentadas se rompe. Se restaura nuestra relación con Dios, uno con el otro y la creación. Este es el lento y paciente trabajo al que todos estamos llamados.

Como Cristianos, quienes somos, qué pensamos y cómo actuamos es tejido en el contexto de la historia de Dios. La Revelación nos dice que estamos llamados, elegidos, amados, perdonados, sanados y restaurados. Pero necesitamos ver estas cosas se reflejadas en los ojos de aquellos en quienes confiamos. La comunidad Cristiana nos recuerda a cada uno de nosotros quienes somos. Cada uno de nosotros es querido, un hijo de Dios y un miembro del cuerpo de Cristo. Y nuestro llamado principal es la plena asociación con Jesús en el negocio familiar de su padre de reconciliación y renovación de la tierra. No hay superhéroes, sólo nosotros juntos, el cuerpo resucitado de Cristo!

Paz,

Fr. Ron

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