

28th Sunday (C)

- I remember reading some years ago a profound & mature letter in the Age, written by a 3rd year student of one of our Melbourne universities.
- She wrote about the importance in her life on taking time out to reflect on her daily experiences because otherwise, in the busy-ness of her day she would miss, what she referred to as 'sacred moments'.
- She claimed that she was thereby able to see beyond the ordinary, everyday experiences, both negative & positive, to encounter something much deeper, more profound & sacred that made sense of things.
- She stopped short of naming this encounter being with God, but it was quite clear that these were the reflections of a realistic, intuitive & insightful young woman of gratitude.
- It reminded me of the words of someone who wrote a book on the study of religions that "the vocation of every human person is to worship the divine".
- In our own time, it seems that the communal rituals of worship & praise of God in most religions is diminishing.
- We are so used to seeing & hearing about anger, wars & violence, bitterness & greed, of people ambitiously striving to get more power & wealth, that when we hear something from a person of gratitude, we are taken aback. Few, it seems accord gratitude to anyone.
- As gratitude diminishes, it's replaced by cynicism & envy & a desire to blame & they can be more infectious than the acknowledgement of things for which we can be grateful.
- From the beginning of time, human beings can all too easily develop ungrateful hearts; from the time Adam & Eve accepted the gifts of their lives but rejected the giver & wanted sole control of their lives.
- The 1st reading & Gospel particularly focus on the theme of gratitude to a God who does extraordinary things in our lives.
- Naaman, the foreigner & the Samaritan in the Gospel are given an extraordinary gift of healing - they recognise, acknowledge & give thanks to the God who does this for them - & as a result, their whole lives change.
- The 9 in the Gospel, who are healed but don't express gratitude, may be physically changed, but their hearts are so hardened & insensitive that they could not let the healing power of God penetrate them.
- It's interesting that God does not take back the gift, granting it to grateful & ungrateful hearts alike, but the grateful will see & experience much more happening to them in the future; the ungrateful will always want more & never be satisfied & never change deep within.

- The grateful, by their change, will become disciples, & like the 3rd year university student, will proclaim the Good News as good.
- This is precisely the calling of everyone who is open to seeing God's gifts to them in their lives - proclaiming hope & gratitude, not only in words, but by their very lives.
- My own vocation as a priest is based on an overwhelming gratitude for a love & friendship I discovered God had for me that I then felt compelled to commit my life to leading others to see that there is nothing more valuable & life-giving than to know this love which is available to everyone, & that to accept it is to open oneself to life & its true meaning & direction.
- Gratitude for life is the basis of all religious worship of the creator & sustainer of life.
- Gratitude to God is not something that does anything for God, but enables us & calls us to live life more creatively & fully.
- A lack of gratitude to God goes hand in hand with a lack of openness to mystery & openness to God, & a lack of readiness to be touched by the gifts received in life through God's affection, love & forgiveness.
- The primary vocation of every Christian is to live lives of gratitude & hope - the response in love to the God who first loves us.
- I would hold that it is this general lack of gratitude that is PARTLY the basis for a lack of vocations to religious life & priesthood (I say only 'partly' because there are a number of more significant reasons).
- We have, I think more than ever, very generous, socially conscious young people involved in all kinds of charitable, social justice & voluntary work, & this is very commendable as a horizontal generosity with a horizontal vision, but doing something for God, out of gratitude & a sense of vocation is not something with which many would be familiar.
- We can confine our Christian vision to purely human values which can be no different from the values of any humanitarian who wants to make a good difference to the world.
- It is good if people can observe Christians as having a love of the poor, who set prisoners free, who help the marginalised, but would they be able to say also that Christians are ones who love God with all their hearts, minds & souls?
- As Christians, our motivation for anything we do for the sake of others should be out of our love of the God, whom we find in the other – in people.
- That, of course assumes that we are truly aware of God's love of us & the ways God blesses us in our lives.
- What can we do to personally open ourselves to God's love, that he may heal in us whatever may require his healing power & what do we need to do to develop an attitude of gratitude to this God?