

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Second Sunday of Easter—Year B

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Second Sunday of Easter

Sunday of Divine Mercy

Reading 1

Acts 4:32-35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind,
and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own,
but they had everything in common.
With great power the apostles bore witness
to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,
and great favor was accorded them all.
There was no needy person among them,
for those who owned property or houses would sell them,
bring the proceeds of the sale,
and put them at the feet of the apostles,
and they were distributed to each according to need.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

R. (1) Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron say,
"His mercy endures forever."

Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His mercy endures forever."

R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

I was hard pressed and was falling,
but the LORD helped me.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
The joyful shout of victory
in the tents of the just:

R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.
This is the day the LORD has made;
let us be glad and rejoice in it.
R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Reading 2

1 John 5:1-6

Beloved:
Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God,
and everyone who loves the Father
loves also the one begotten by him.
In this way we know that we love the children of God
when we love God and obey his commandments.
For the love of God is this,
that we keep his commandments.
And his commandments are not burdensome,
for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.
And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.
Who indeed is the victor over the world
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ,
not by water alone, but by water and blood.
The Spirit is the one that testifies,
and the Spirit is truth.

Alleluia

John 20:29

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord;
Blessed are those who have not seen me, but still believe!
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve,
was not with them when Jesus came.
So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."
But he said to them,
"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands
and put my finger into the nail marks
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside
and Thomas was with them.
Jesus came, although the doors were locked,
and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."
Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands,
and bring your hand and put it into my side,
and do not be unbelieving, but believe."
Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples
that are not written in this book.
But these are written that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Exegesis

Acts 4:32-35

At the Last Supper Jesus turned to His Father in prayer. He prayed, “Father may they be one as You and I are one. St. Paul would later talk about putting on the heart and mind of Christ. As Christians were baptized in the Holy Spirit they shared in the same Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen Lord. And so, the community sharing in the same Spirit were able to become of one heart and mind, the heart, and the mind of Christ. With that came a unity of purpose and of mission.

We can learn a lot from the communities of faith that we call the early Church. It is certainly a model that Jesus gives us as He gathered the 12 apostles around Himself. The Jewish people had a strong sense of community, of extended family. They cared in a special way for the most vulnerable among them, e.g. widows and orphans. Jesus takes the importance of community to a whole new level. As we travel on this journey of life we are called to walk together as people of faith, of one heart and mind.

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Psalm 118 is an individual psalm of thanksgiving. It is filled with gratitude to God from beginning to end. The tone is set by identical phrases which serve as “bookends.” The first and the final verse, i.e. verse 1 and verse 29, are identical, “Give thanks to the Lord, who is good, whose love endures forever.” Everything that is, that was, and ever will be, has its origin in God’s steadfast, unchanging love. God’s love therefore must be the foundation of all our lives and all our gratitude.

1 John 5:1-6

Our pericope today follows the famous 4th Chapter treatise on love by the beloved disciple John. John describes what we have come to call *the Primacy of Grace*. God’s love precedes all things, and all our lives must be a response to that love. Our response is love, the sharing of life with God and with each other. It means that we live our lives in a certain way, in harmony with God and His creation. This harmony is made possible by the Paschal Mystery. It is the outpouring of divine life and gift that requires our response. This life come to us through water and blood as poured from the side of Christ. Water is the new birth of Baptism and blood is the death of the Lord that we make present at the Eucharist every day. If we unite ourselves with Him, if we die with Him we shall live with Him.

Exegesis (Continued)

John 20:19-31

There are two words in today's Gospel that don't translate well into English. The first is the word *peace* and the second is the word *send* or *sent*. Jesus talked about a peace that only He could give and not as the world gives. The underlying word in Hebrew/Aramaic is *shalom*. The Jewish understanding of this peace is precisely that it comes from God, God is the source of this peace. As the serenity prayer states, it does not promise freedom from the storms of life, but peace amid the storms. For me it is an anchor point in this fast pace and turbulent world.

The idea of being sent by someone in the ancient world had a much deeper connotation than we often think of. To send someone was to give them whatever authority that the sender had to give. It might be likened to a modern-day power of attorney. If a king sent one of his subjects to perform some tasks or enter some contract, he would carry with him the full authority of the king. So, when Jesus sent out His apostles, He gave them His power and authority, the power and authority given Him by His Father. Recall their amazement when the apostles returned from their first missionary assignment. As priests and deacons, we can attest to those gifts in ministry.

Whis this Gospel at a school Mass one day, I asked the children why the Risen Lord in His glorified body still had the nail marks in His hands and the wound in His side. One of the children answered, "Because He wants us to remember how much He loves us." That was a better answer than I was looking for. My thoughts are that there is a recognizable continuity between this life and the life to come. I feel that it is not some entirely different life but a continuation of the life that we now experience. It is the same life that begins at the moment of conception.

Reflection

This weekend and often throughout the Easter Season we will be reading from the First Letter of John and from John's Gospel. John, the beloved disciple, knew the heart and the mind of Jesus. It is apparent that Jesus shared with John some of his deepest thoughts and revealed to him the most profound truths of life. John opens his first letter by talking about his very deep and personal relationship with Jesus.

John's Gospel is sometimes referred to as the Gospel of Love or the Gospel of Life. John wrote the great passage that sums up the Good News, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him might not perish, but might have eternal life." (Jn 3:16) Love is the sharing of life and the sharing of God's life if for eternity, because God is being itself; i.e., the one who's very essence is to be. God is therefore eternal, and to share in the life of God is to live forever. At the end of the Gospel this weekend John states, "These (words) are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name." (Jn 20:31)

John reveals to us that faith equals eternal life. Faith is the acceptance of the gift of life that God wants to share with us. Because God is love and love must be free, we have the ability to remain connected to the source of being or we have the ability to turn away and cut ourselves off from the source of life. We, like the Prodigal Son, can turn away from the Father's love and travel to the big emptiness, or we can remain on the vine and draw upon the life-giving water of God's grace. Faith is based on this fundamental decision that each one of us must ultimately make. A line in Deuteronomy sums it up as God says, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore, choose life, that you may live." (Dt 30:19) Faith is a gift that must be accepted and lived.

The good news is that it is God's will that none of His children be lost. God wants "all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." (I Tm 2:4) God wants all His children to accept the gift of His love and His life. Love is the sharing of life that seeks the good of the other and that seeks union with the other. Jesus prayed, "Father may they be one as You and I are one. (Jn 17:21)

John quotes Jesus as he proclaimed, "I came so that you might have life and have life to the fullest." (Jn 10:10) To live with the indwelling of the Spirit of God is to be fully alive. To live with the Spirit within us is to live with the gifts of the Spirit, bearing the fruits of the Spirit evident and transparent in our lives. St. Irenaeus once said, "The Glory of God is a human being fully alive." St. Paul reminds us that eternal life has already begun in us but is not yet complete. Eternal life begins in the here and now. It is in the here and now that we must make the choice to unite our lives with the Spirit of the Risen Lord. It is what St. John refers to as faith. Choose life therefore and do it here and do it now! Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

The focus this weekend is on faith and on the gift of eternal life. I must confess that for years I looked at faith as a creed that we say or a system of beliefs that we adhere to. I looked at eternal life as something to hope for in the distant future. I now see that understanding of both faith and eternal life totally incomplete.

At a time in my life when my faith was very superficial and mechanical, I was searching for more. A priest friend recommended that I read several books written by Fr. John Powell, S.J. One of them was titled, *Fully Human, Fully Alive*. One of his lines in that book struck me particularly hard. He said, "Fear not that you might die, fear that you may never really live." At that time, I was existing and not really living. His words sent me searching even deeper. Over time I had become more and more self-centered and withdrawn. I was blocking God and others out of my life.

The premise of Fr. Powell's book was that we human beings often turn inward. It is a natural tendency of our fallen human nature. The inward journey always becomes a dead end, full of loneliness, and pain. Often, we become riveted on our own pain and become stuck. He taught that we first had to allow ourselves to be loved by God and others. With that love healing happens. With God's grace we can learn the truth, that we are loved unconditionally. Only then can we begin to accept and love ourselves. Only then can we move out of ourselves in self-giving love. When we empty ourselves, we allow room for God to enter our hearts and souls.

St. Paul often talked about putting on the heart and mind of Christ. He once said, "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me." Jesus is the source, the mediator, and the sustainer of all life. He is the one through whom all things came into being. At the Last Supper Jesus talked deeply of the promise of His indwelling presence.

One day in my struggles, I turned to God and pleaded with Him to show me His love and His presence. In a moment of grace God melted the crust that I had placed around my heart. I was overwhelmed by his love. Never had I experienced the embrace of His love and mercy so profoundly. It was an experience that would change my life forever. I often explain the transformation as moving from a dark black and white movie to a high definition bright and colorful world. Everything changed. I was looking at life through a new lens.

It was the influx of God's Holy Spirit. My life moved from existing to really living. I opened my bible that evening and was instantly drawn to the words of Jesus in John 10:10, "I came so that you might have life and have life to the fullest." For the first time in my life, I understood what Jesus meant by the fullness of life. It is the same Greek word, *zoe*, that is often translated as eternal life. God is the source of that life and so that life is forever for those who accept the gift and remain in His love. This is what John, the beloved disciple calls faith, the indwelling presence of the Risen Lord. And so, faith equals eternal life. They are one and the same.

I found myself able to love, where I could not love before, because Christ was loving in and through me. For that I am and will always be eternally grateful!

