

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 Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B

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

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time—B

Reading 1

Genesis 3:9-15

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree,
the LORD God called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?"
He answered, "I heard you in the garden;
but I was afraid, because I was naked,
so I hid myself."
Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked?
You have eaten, then,
from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!"
The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me—
she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it."
The LORD God then asked the woman,
"Why did you do such a thing?"
The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:
"Because you have done this, you shall be banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;
on your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike at your head,
while you strike at his heel."

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R. (7bc) **With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

R. **With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.**

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R. **With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.**

I trust in the LORD;
my soul trusts in his word.
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,
let Israel wait for the LORD.
R. With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption
and he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.
R. With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.

Reading 2

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1

Brothers and sisters:
Since we have the same spirit of faith,
according to what is written, *I believed, therefore I spoke*,
we too believe and therefore we speak,
knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus
will raise us also with Jesus
and place us with you in his presence.
Everything indeed is for you,
so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people
may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.
Therefore, we are not discouraged;
rather, although our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.
For this momentary light affliction
is producing for us an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison,
as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen;
for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.
For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent,
should be destroyed,
we have a building from God,
a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

Alleluia

John 12:31b-32

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Now the ruler of the world will be driven out, says the Lord;
and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 3:20-35

Jesus came home with his disciples.
Again the crowd gathered,
making it impossible for them even to eat.
When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him,
for they said, "He is out of his mind."
The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said,
"He is possessed by Beelzebul,"
and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons."

Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables,
"How can Satan drive out Satan?
If a kingdom is divided against itself,
that kingdom cannot stand.
And if a house is divided against itself,
that house will not be able to stand.
And if Satan has risen up against himself
and is divided, he cannot stand;
that is the end of him.
But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property
unless he first ties up the strong man.
Then he can plunder the house.
Amen, I say to you,
all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be
forgiven them.
But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit
will never have forgiveness,
but is guilty of an everlasting sin."
For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

His mother and his brothers arrived.
Standing outside they sent word to him and called him.
A crowd seated around him told him,
"Your mother and your brothers and your sisters
are outside asking for you."
But he said to them in reply,
"Who are my mother and my brothers?"
And looking around at those seated in the circle he said,
"Here are my mother and my brothers.
For whoever does the will of God
is my brother and sister and mother."

Exegesis

Genesis 3:9-15

The story of Adam and Eve is embedded in the second Creation account (Gen. 2:4b–4:1). Likely written ca. 950 B.C.E. as part of the Yahwistic history of Israel, this account is the older of the two Creation stories. In this story, God creates a male human being and a female “helper” and sets them in a lush and paradisiacal garden where all of their needs are met. God instructs the man not to eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” lest he die. The serpent, a fellow creature described as subtle and crafty, convinces the woman that the fruit of that tree is good and she will not die. When the two eat the fruit, they recognize immediately the consequences of their actions. God punishes them for their misdeeds and expels them from the garden (3:8–24). In its mythic elements the story also offers explanations for why serpents crawl on the ground (v. 14), why enmity exists between humans and serpents (v. 15), the paradox of sexual pleasure and the pain of childbearing (v. 16), and the continual conflict between humans and nature (vv. 17–19).

Genesis depicts the man and woman as responsible creatures acting according to their own wills. Their disobedience is often depicted then as rebellion against God’s commands. Although there is no doctrine of original sin in the Genesis story, Augustine used it to promulgate an interpretation which held that the first couple’s sin was transmitted to every successive generation and thus all humans were infected with sin. While Augustine held the couple acted freely according to their will, he stated clearly that their evil act introduced corruption into God’s good creation. Irenaeus used the story to demonstrate that God is a loving Father who helps his children recognize their mistakes and learn from them. Many of the Greek church fathers (e.g., Theodore of Mopsuestia) emphasize the universality of human sin.

In the NT writings of Paul, the Fall takes on a universal dimension, introducing sin and mortality into the lives of all humanity. Paul acknowledges that “as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, so death spread to all because all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12).¹

In the primordial Garden of Eden man was in free of natural concupiscence as sin had not yet entered creation. Evil however did exist. Satan, the fallen angel, predates the creation of humanity. Satan was there in the Garden. Satan enticed Eve and Adam to turn on God and now sin and death are a part of reality. Created in God’s image and likeness, man was created out of love and for love. Love must be free, or it would not be love. Freewill is a part of God’s creation. The opposing force of evil provides a level playing field from which we choose between good and evil. “God formed man to be imperishable; the image of His own nature He made him. But by the power of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.” (Wis 2:23-24).

God expels man from the Garden of Eden but does not abandon him. “When He expelled the man, He settled him east of the Garden of Eden; and He stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Out of love God continues to care and protect humanity.

¹ Henry L. Carrigan Jr., “Fall, the,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 454–455.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Psalm 130 is one of the seven penitential Psalms. The entire Psalm is included in our pericope today. It can be broken down into three sections: vs. 1-3 lament, vs. 4-6 trust in Yahweh's forgiveness, and vs. 7-8 address to the community after an oracle of salvation.² It begins with the lament, *Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord*. This cry echoes the cry of Jonah from the belly of the whale in Jonah 2:2. From the storm and from the depths Jonah cries out to God for mercy and forgiveness. He comes to realize that by turning away from God and God's will he has separated himself from God. He acknowledges that he has disconnected himself from the source of mercy, "Those who worship vain idols forsake their source of mercy" (Jonah 2:9). The realization is that if we consciously turn away from God in an act of freewill, we must subsequently turn back to God. The second step is then to trust in the God that we turn toward, and the third step is to glorify God out of gratitude.

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1

St. Paul begins Chapter 4: "But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us." We are the earthen vessels that St. Paul is talking about. The treasure is the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes in his *Letter to the Galatians*: "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God..." (Gal 2:20-21a). The indwelling promise of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Risen Lord are one and the same. We are earthen vessels or temples of the Spirit. This gift is the promise that Jesus made to us at the Last Supper. This is the same unseen eternal Spirit that St. Paul is referring to in verse 4:18.

"Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God" (2 Cor 4:15). My personal experience of the flood of grace that I have felt working in my life overwhelm me with gratitude and it inspires me to glorify God. The opening of our hearts, our earthen vessels requires a personal choice on our part. We must open that door; it must be opened from the inside. God respects our freewill at all costs. The dwelling not made by human hands eternal in heaven is available to each one of us, but it is a gift that we must except, it is the gift of love and mercy, the fullness of life and ultimately the gift of eternal life.

2. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, P.H., Englewood, N.J., page 548.

Exegesis (Continued)

Mark 3:20-35

Our Gospel scene today takes place early in the ministry of Jesus. His ministry began with the temptation in the desert where He met Satan head on. From there he was confronted by demons and opposition continually. He received stern rebukes from the Pharisees and the Herodians after He cured the man with the withered hand: “The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against Him to put Him to death” (Mk 3:6). Now He faces His most vehement opposition group as portrayed by Mark, the Jerusalem Scribes. They accuse Him of being in legion with Beelzebul, aka Satan. The literal translation is, *He has Beelzebul*. Beelzebul appears in 2 Kings 1:3, 6 as a mocking distortion of the Canaanite god of Ekron. In other sources it is translated as follows: *lord of the flies, prince of demons* or *ruler of demons*. In any event it is Satan and Jesus is being accused of housing his indwelling presence, i.e. being influenced or being possessed by him.

Jesus of course is filled with, possessed by the Holy Spirit. From His baptism we are told that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and remained with Him. He was led by that same Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Of course, that same Spirit led and worked through Him His entire earthly life. And thus, the Scribes are blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that the unforgivable sin is calling the Holy Spirit the devil and therefore inverting good and evil, making Satan into a god and God into evil. If one doubts the movement of Satan in our current culture think of the inversion of good and evil today, calling light darkness and darkness light. Those in legion with Satan are not likely to seek God’s love and mercy. In fact, in the words of Jonah, they have cut themselves off from the source of love and mercy.

We are told that the family of Jesus arrived. Sometimes it is confusing to people when they hear of brothers and sisters of Jesus. It is important to point out that in Aramaic there were no words to describe what we call brothers or sisters in English. The Jewish notion of brothers and sisters was inclusive of all cousins. Extended families typically lived together with a common courtyard and families were very close. Jesus points out that ultimately His real family are all who do the will of God. The will of God is that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth (1 Tim 2:3). Our mission then must be about the salvation of souls and searching and preserving the Truth.

We seek the Truth by rejecting Satan the father of lies and opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit. We are called to be Spirit filled, Spirit led and Spirit giving people. As St. Paul reminds us we are earthen vessels called to be temples of the Holy Spirit and a brother and sister in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

Our readings this weekend begin with the Book of Genesis, the story of the fall of humanity. It begins: “After the man, Adam, had eaten from the tree, the Lord God called out to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” As I was praying with the scripture this week I could not move beyond that haunting question. It seems to me that God must be asking that question a lot these days, “Where are YOU?” Each one of us must ask that question as well. Where are we in relation with God?

Adam and Eve are feeling the separation from God for the first time, and they are feeling lost and ashamed. In their guilt they are passing the blame from man to woman to the serpent. They are experiencing alienation from the source of life, from the ground of their being, and death enters our world, i.e. real death – separation from God. Thus, humanity enters a fallen state and their deepest longings become a desire for restoration and healing. Man longs to return to an original state of being prior to the event of humanity first rejecting God’s love, turning away from God. And God asks the haunting question, “Where are You?”

Whether conscious of it or not, every human being lives with this deep primordial longing for a return to one-ness with God. The entire Old Testament is a story of a people seeking atonement with God, i.e. literally, at-one-ment. As repeated efforts of sacrifice and reparation fall short, they turn to a deep longing for a savior, and the longing for God to send a Savior into our fallen world begins to dominate the lives of the people and enters into sacred scripture especially through the prophet Isaiah.

Our beautiful Psalm this week reminds us that, “With the Lord there is mercy and the fullness of redemption.... With you is forgiveness... and He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.” We live in the time of the fulfillment of that promise of God. God so loved us that He sent His only Son into our world to assume our fallen human nature, to enter the waters of our baptism in solidarity with us, to take our sins to the Cross, to raise us up with Him to new life.

From the Cross Jesus is drawing all people to Himself. Out of His passionate love He is drawing each one of us back to our original state of one-ness with God. God longs for all of us to return to Him as the father of the Prodigal Son waits and longs for his son to return. “God wills all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth” (1 Tim 2).

Yet, the question of the day remains, “Where are YOU?” In the end nothing else matters except that God knows where we are in relation to His offer of eternal life and love.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us your faithful, and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

Personal Witness

From the earliest days that I can recall I felt God's presence in my life. I vividly remember having a deep experience of God when I was just 6 years old. As I was preparing for First Communion I began to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. I remember talking to Jesus as I knelt in prayer after receiving Him on that day. I have been talking and listening to Him in my heart my entire life. In my early years, however, I do not recall being cognizant of a Spiritual life as I know it today. It may be that I did and did not recognize it as such.

In my early thirties as I was discerning my call to the priesthood, I was doing a lot of spiritual reading. A friend introduced me to the writings of Frank E. Peretti such as *Piercing the Darkness* and *This Present Darkness*. I found them very entertaining. They are action novels that portray two separate realms, the spiritual and the corporeal, in a simultaneous storyline. It raised my awareness of the reality of spiritual warfare and spirituality in general.

In April of 1999 as I was making final preparations for my ordination the Columbine High School tragedy occurred. I was sitting in my seminary dorm room when someone stopped by and told me to turn on my television. As I watched the aftermath of that massacre unfold, I was overwhelmed with a sense of evil. When I saw the pictures of the two gunmen, when I looked into their eyes, I felt a chill run down my spine. It was an overwhelming feeling of Satan's presence. I could sense it, feel it, and see it!

In 2004 I led a group of Catholic pilgrims to Rome, and Assisi, and other spiritual shrines in Italy and then Medjugorje. I celebrated Mass daily at various holy places including the tomb of St. Francis, the tomb of St. Claire, and the tomb of Padre Pio just to mention a few. I was accompanied by a very holy and a devout group of Catholic laity and several nuns. It was a profoundly spiritual experience in my life. The week that we were in Medjugorje coincided with their world youth days celebration. I was invited to celebrate Mass for the English-speaking crowd and was asked to hear confessions. During those numerous hours in the confessional, I was overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit that I could feel flowing through me, continually giving me the words that God wanted the penitents to hear. I know that they were not my words, they were God's words. Although I had always felt the power of the Holy Spirit in ministry this was far more intense, I could literally feel the energy pulsing through me.

I returned to my parish assignment with a heightened awareness of the Spiritual realm. I experienced the Holy Spirit in new and more vivid ways working through people in my parish. I was also keenly aware of dark or evil spirits at work in people in the community at large and in the parish. To this day this intensified cognition of the Spiritual has directed and deepened my prayer life. It has given my prayer a clearer focus and renewed sense of purpose. Despite the darkness that I experience from time to time, the peace that only God can give envelopes me and fills me with His love and mercy and overwhelms me with gratitude.

In peace and gratitude,

