

## **Healing and Salvation.**

The account of the healing of the 10 lepers by Jesus is accompanied by that of the healing of Naaman, the Syrian, taken from the second book of Kings. The two stories respond to each other and give us three important lessons.

The first is that of the love of God which is addressed to any person whatsoever, a universal love which, here in our readings, gives salvation to strangers to the chosen people of Israel: the general who comes from a pagan country and the 10th leper who is a Samaritan, a rival region of Jerusalem. The message is transparent: God makes no distinction. Salvation is offered to all.

This salvation will come about on one condition, however.

This is the second lesson to remember. The condition for access to salvation, to healing in the case of the general and the lepers, is that they themselves take a personal step of faith in God. For Naaman, this approach is carried out in confidence in the word of his representative the prophet Elisha. "The Syrian general Naaman, who was a leper, went down to the Jordan River and immersed himself there seven times, to obey the word of Elisha, the man of God." For lepers, it is done by presenting themselves to Jesus, the Messenger of God, recognizing him as such. "As he entered a village, ten lepers came to meet him. They stopped at a distance and cried out to him, "Jesus, master, have mercy on us."

In both cases, the take-home message is the same. God wants people who want to approach Him to take a few steps themselves. He is able to heal them without it, but the account of Saint Luke and that of the Old Testament show us that in general God acts when we take the trouble to ask him in faith. Third lesson to be learned from these two healings: the importance of thanksgiving. Naaman wishes to shower the prophet Elisha with gifts. "Please accept a present from your servant." Faced with Elisha's refusal, he raised his thanksgiving to God himself "because I no longer want to offer either holocaust or sacrifice to other gods than to the Lord God of Israel". And the 10th leper turns around to come and thank Jesus. "[He] retraced his steps, glorifying God in a loud voice. He threw himself face down at the feet of Jesus giving him thanks.

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Often in life we pass quickly over the graces received by appropriating them like the 9 lepers without seeing or recognizing their source. What these two texts invite us to do is that, following the example of Naaman and the 10th leper, we know how to praise God for his benefits, in particular for the life he gives us and for the creation that surrounds us. We could often make this beautiful prayer: “Lord God and Master of the World, accept the life and the creation that I have received from you. You gave them to me on earth here below to become bearers of eternal life. Be blessed and thankful”.

It is fortunate that every Sunday we live our Eucharistic celebrations in an atmosphere of thanksgiving. This is the essence of what Sunday Mass is. We bring to it, of course, our requests and our personal prayer intentions, but above all we enter into this movement of universal thanksgiving which makes us recognize the gift that God makes to us in the Body and Blood of his Son that we let's share. Without this horizon, our Sunday Masses will remain meritorious practices at best, but they will miss the essentials.

May our celebration today find us open to the surprises of God who not only heals our wounds, our leprosy, but accompanies us on the journey of our life as a father or a mother does for his children.

*-Fr Bert*

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## **SAINTS:**

**Wilfrid of Ripon, Bishop of York, 12 October.** Wilfrid, or Wilfrith, was born of a noble family in Northumbria in about the year 633. He was educated at the monastery of Lindisfarne, but disapproved of what he judged to be their Celtic insularity. He journeyed to Canterbury and then to Rome. He spent three years at Lyons and was there admitted as a monk. He was appointed Abbot of Ripon and took with him the Roman monastic system and Benedictine Rule, which he immediately introduced. At the Synod of Whitby, his dominance was largely responsible for the victory of the Roman party over the Celts and, when he was elected Bishop of York, he went to Compiègne to be consecrated by twelve Frankish bishops rather than risk any doubt of schism by being ordained by Celtic bishops. There were upsets first with Chad and then with Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, but the Roman authorities took his side and he was eventually restored to his See. After further disputes, he resigned the See of York and became Bishop of Hexham, spending his remaining years in the monastery at Ripon. His gift to the English church was to make it more clearly a part of the Church universal, but his manner and methods were not such as to draw people close to him at a personal level. He died on this day at Ripon in the year 709.

**Edward the Confessor, King of England, 13 October .** Edward was born in 1002, the son of the English King Ethelred and his Norman wife Emma. Living in exile during the Danish supremacy, he was invited back to England in 1042 to become king, and was heartily welcomed as a descendant of the old royal line. However, his reign was a balancing act between the influences of stronger characters at his court or overseas, sustained by Edward's diplomacy and determination. Edward's reputation for sanctity was built on his personal, more than his political, qualities. He was concerned to maintain peace and justice in his realm, to avoid foreign wars, and to put his faith into practice. He was generous to the poor, hospitable to strangers, but no mere pietist. Having vowed as a young man to go on pilgrimage to Rome should his family fortunes ever be restored, he later felt it irresponsible to leave his kingdom, and was permitted instead to found or endow a monastery dedicated to St Peter. Edward chose the abbey on Thorney Island, by the river Thames, thus beginning the royal patronage of Westminster Abbey. He died on 5 January 1066 and his remains translated to the Abbey on this day in 1162.

**REMINDER: All the youth of Holy Trinity are invited to take part in the youth assembly TODAY, after the 9:30 service.**