

October 13, 2013 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Prepared by Fr. Jim Noonan, MM, South Sudan

Second Kings 5:14-17; Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4; Second Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19

The readings for this Sunday invite us to be open to receive the gift of wisdom. They offer us a good opportunity to learn in a deeper way the power that we receive when our hearts are full of gratefulness.

The first reading from Second Kings tells the moving story of Naaman, an official from Syria, who came to Israel to be cured by the prophet Elisha. Elisha told Naaman to go to the River Jordan and there to bathe seven times. This would make him well.

Naaman did as he was instructed, and was cured. With much gratitude he returned to give thanks to Elisha. In his efforts to show his gratitude, he was shouting “Now I know there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.”

It is good for us to consider the example that Naaman, the Syrian, gives us. His story challenges us to remember all the times in our life that we have nearly lost hope. We prayed in desperation and much to our joy the seemingly impossible occurred – our prayers were answered.

Today is our day to remember these times and give thanks to our loving and caring God. Faith and trust can move mountains. When it happens, we must give thanks.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds Timothy of the blessing that we have received from the Lord Jesus. In Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, he proclaims, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Blessed are those who can give thanks to the Lord, to each person who has helped to sustain them and to creation that makes our life full.

We need to reflect on how blessed we have been. We should never deny that life has its difficulties that challenge us. However, when we put all that happens into perspective, we are moved with much gratitude. We appreciate that the Spirit of our loving God has never been absent.

I heard a story recently that I think demonstrates how active the Spirit is in the life of those in need. This event took place at a workshop that one of our Solidarity missionaries gave in South Sudan. At the end of the workshop one of the participants related what had occurred in her heart during the days of reflection. The theme of the workshop was on the dignity of women.

She recounted that during her whole life she was never exposed to the message that each person is special, unique, and equal to all other human beings. She shared: “I always felt I was inferior to others, not worthy of praise. Because of these days, I will now walk on this earth as an equal with all my brothers and sisters that I meet. For this I give many thanks.”

Another moving story that I recently heard was about a woman in Rumbek, South Sudan. Some years ago a sister offered to teach her how to write her name. She agreed that she would try to learn if Sister would help. The woman agreed but silently thought, “This is impossible.” Much to her joy and thanks, she loves to tell this story because over the years she has become very literate and now runs her own business in the local market. She now says with much pride and thanks: “No man will ever again beat me or my daughters.”

When we are full of gratitude, we are full of new life. Gratitude is food for our souls that gives energy that cannot be matched.

I would like to share my dream with you: No more nuclear weapons on our planet because if nuclear weapons are used they will kill a multitude of our brothers and sisters and devastate our environment. When my dream becomes a reality, the war industry will find wonderful new industries to nurture life rather than destroy life.

The money made available from stopping war will make it possible for the billions who go to bed hungry every night to delight, at last, with a full stomach and a decent house to live in. These same people will have health care and comfort in their last years.

In the gospel, Jesus rejoiced when one leper returned to give thanks for his healing. It is not hard to imagine how many of the poor in our world would wholeheartedly give thanks to the Lord Jesus if their families had food, housing, education, health care, jobs and the opportunity to worship their loving God on a regular basis.

All is possible if only we listen to the Holy Spirit who is the source of wisdom and love. The Spirit says: "Choose life, not death." For example, the United States alone spends over \$52 billion annually on nuclear weapons. This is enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals on poverty alleviation. If only we would stop war then every person can have all their human needs answered. Let's join hands and build a new world. Jesus is counting on us.

How grateful the poor, I dare say, the people of the world would be if these billions and trillions would be used for development and not war.

Thy reign come! Thy will be done on earth as in heaven!

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