

## 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday C (Luke 17: 11-19)

An old farmer and his wife were celebrating 50 years of married life. Their children gave them a party. Friends came to congratulate them. It was a festive occasion. They looked at old pictures. They reminisced about happy events. Someone put on an old phonograph record and they even danced a little. When the party was over, everyone went home. And the happy couple was left alone. It was a tender moment, so tender that the mostly silent husband was moved to speak. He said: "You know, Ma, over these 50 years, sometimes I have loved you so much that I could hardly keep from telling you." She dabbed her eyes with a tissue, and said: "Thank you, Pa."

It took him 50 years to say, "I love you." And even then, it was more an explanation than a declaration. Why are many of us so reluctant to say the things we really feel or mean? Why are we so frugal with our words of praise or gratitude?

Jesus must have wondered the same thing. He had healed ten men who were afflicted with leprosy. It came about in a rather unusual way. The lepers had shouted from a distance: "Jesus, have pity on us." Only one of them turned around and went back to say thank you. Then Jesus wondered, "where are the others?"

Were they a bunch of ingrates? One minute they were trapped in a living hell; the next hour they were free, clean, and starting over. We can only presume that they were grateful, because they didn't actually say so.

Blessed are the parents who teach their children to say "Thank you." They learn a great lesson, a great beginning, to become people with grateful hearts. Invariably, people with grateful, appreciative hearts are among the most well-balanced, sane, happy people I have ever encountered. The unappreciative, ungrateful, resentful, complaining, are among the most poorly adjusted unhappy people I have met.

Jesus had a wonderful understanding of the importance of gratitude. Recall that he asked to be remembered by his followers at the Last Supper. We recall his words each time we celebrate Mass. Recall also that the Mass is often called the Eucharist, which comes from the Greek, meaning "Thanksgiving." Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we remember with grateful hearts, the saving work of Jesus and his astounding care for each one of us. And like the one leper who returned to give thanks, we come to Jesus to be fed and healed. With grateful hearts we say thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Al Grosskopf, S.J.