THE TEN LEPERS AND OUR INGRATITUDE

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Beloved in Christ the Lord, on this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost we discover how astonishing is the patience of the Lord God. The patience of the Lord God toward sinful man. A patience that we experience every day of our life here on earth. A patience that we experience whenever we sin, whenever spiritual leprosy touches us.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, a passage of which we have just heard, we read that the lepers ran to meet the Lord Jesus on His way, but we realise that it was God's grace that moved them to go out to meet the Saviour. The Lord God draws to Himself. In a wondrous manner He leads even souls that are very far from Him. Through what is called prevenient grace He stirs them, pushes them, as it were, in His direction, in the direction of conversion. But it depends on us, men, whether we take advantage of this grace with which the Lord God endows us, or not. We have reason, we have free will, and each of us must make choices every day, must choose between what is good and what is evil, between God and Satan, between Heaven and hell.

How shocking is the love of the Lord God, who today cleanses ten lepers, although He knows perfectly well that only one of them will return to give glory to God, to give thanks for the healing. The Lord Jesus does not calculate in a human way; He does not wonder whether it is worth His while to work a miracle, whether it is worth His while to cleanse those unfortunate people of leprosy. Christ waits unceasingly for the sinner struck with spiritual leprosy; He does not cease to stretch out His holy and venerable hands to wash the soul stained by sin in His most precious blood.

INGRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFTS

How sad is our human ingratitude! We so rarely thank the Lord God for the goods and graces that we receive from Him. For that is unfortunately how it is: when we need help, when difficulties appear in our life, sickness, loneliness, old age, when someone close to us dies, then we are able to turn to the Lord God. Then we are able to present Him with a whole litany of various petitions and complaints. But when we receive something from the Lord God, we treat it as something that is simply due to us. There is no gratitude in us. We are loathsome ingrates.

We are rather like a debtor who is looking for another opportunity to take out a loan, and when he asks for it, he is pleasant, polite, and promises to repay it on time. But when the day of repayment comes, he ignores his creditor, treats him with contempt, laughs in his face. And surely Christ could address to all of us today the words that He spoke about the lepers: "Not one was found who would return and give glory to God."

How astonishing is our human folly! The Lord God comforts the afflicted, raises up the fallen, gives us health, talents, increases our human strength. And how do we behave? From the Lord God we take, but we ascribe everything to our own resourcefulness. We live in the conviction that we owe everything to ourselves. What is more, my dear friends, we very often even become critics of the Lord God's actions. We would like to dictate what, when and how He is to do. We forget completely the words of Christ the Lord: "Whoever abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing." And although we have heard these words in our life hundreds, thousands of times, we remain all the while like stones lying on the bed of a river, which for 2000 years has been washing and smoothing them with the water of the Catholic faith, yet inside, despite this water, we remain untouched, because we know everything better anyway than almighty God.

How appalling is human contempt for Christ's gifts! How often do we abuse God's goodness? The Lord God endows us with health, and we use it to sin and to offend God. The Lord God endows us with wealth, and we live like misers and cannot share with those

who suffer real poverty. The Lord God gives us a sound mind, and we use it to manipulate, to set traps for others, to spread slander. The Lord God has given us Himself. Quiet, defenceless as a child, a prisoner of love present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. And we are indifferent when He is offended, when one sacrilege after another is committed. The Lord God has given us the treasure of the Catholic faith, without which it is impossible to please God, the profession of which is necessary for salvation. And we, my dear friends, shrug our shoulders indifferently when this treasure is destroyed, when the Catholic faith is falsified. We keep silent in the name of a satanic pseudo-obedience, of respect for a pseudo-hierarchy. For the gifts and graces received we do not show the Saviour the honour, gratitude and love that are due to Him. On the contrary, one might say that the more benefits we receive from the hand of God, the more ingratitude and injuries we inflict on God.

That is why our Creator and Saviour complains through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Hear, O heavens; give ear, O earth, for the Lord speaks. I have nourished and raised sons, but they have risen up against Me."

THANKSGIVING IN THE MASS

Dear faithful, on this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost each of us is like a leper who goes out to meet the Lord Jesus. Let us no longer be ungrateful people. Let us no longer be people who are forever complaining about everything. Let us no longer be people who poison their own lives and the lives of their neighbours with spite, with litanies of grievances and complaints. How much of this infernal ingratitude, my dear friends, is there all the time among us Catholics? How much ingratitude, how many grievances in our families, in our workplaces, among neighbours, acquaintances, friends and enemies. Let us learn, my dear friends, from the example of that Samaritan, whom the Jews despised, to show gratitude to the Lord God for all the gifts, for all the graces with which we are so abundantly endowed every day of our life.

If we seriously wanted to thank almighty God for all that we receive from Him and do not notice, all that seems to us obvious, all that seems to us something due — if we truly wanted to thank the Lord God for all of it, our life would not suffice. What, then, are we to do? What are we to do, apart from making the resolution today that we will cease to be spiritual ingrates, that we will become people who live in gratitude toward the Lord God? What must we do? In what way can we thank the Lord God? In the way that God Himself has shown us.

You have come here to hear Holy Mass, to stand at the foot of the cross, to look upon the altar on which Christ will accomplish His sacrifice, which has a fourfold purpose. The sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of propitiation, the sacrifice of petition and, finally, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Let us place on the paten today, my dear friends, which the priest will raise on high, our thanksgiving for all the graces and gifts that we have received in our life from the Lord God, which we so often fail to notice, which we so often fail to value as we should. May we, my dear friends, see and understand how much the Lord God does for us every day. Then all our grumbling and complaining would come to an end, and in their place would come praise and thanksgiving.

And let us repeat today in our hearts, my beloved, the words of the psalm that the priest speaks whenever he celebrates Holy Mass, just before the consumption of the most precious Blood of the Lord Jesus: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has done for me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord."

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Praised be Jesus Christ. Amen.