

13th Sunday After Pentecost 2009

Has it ever happened that you did a good deed for somebody and were never thanked for it? I suppose you've had the experience because it's a rather common thing. But it stings, all the same, at least somewhat. It's odd, is it not, that something so small as an expression of gratitude, a simple Thank You can appease a benefactor. Hard to say why acknowledging a benefit done is so satisfying. What little compensation there is, objectively speaking, in gratitude for what may have been a great donation of love, caring, money, gift, time spent. When we do good, all we may need is a Thank You. Although we may indeed require something in return, especially if material goods were given, the best compensation comes from God, either here or, better, in eternity.

The Gospel has to do with the gratitude and ingratitude shown towards Jesus. Some of you may be familiar with the complaint once made by the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary. It's a poignant outcry from the Heart of Christ which mirrors some of His complaints in the Gospels: 'Could you not watch one hour with Me?' or here, 'Where are the other nine?'

The remarkable thing about our Lord's words is that He does not complain—as rightly He might—about men's usual and frequent sins, but He rather complains that for all He did for us in suffering, in sweating through the Passion and in yielding His life for us in the Great Agony, we don't have a care. The neglect of religion, of the obedience and love for Christ, of the duties of our faith—few that they are—are not the concern of the majority of men. They don't care. But God cares for them. They're only content with having the pleasures of this life and as long as they can have them. As for salvation, it's out of mind. There is only thought for the present moment and for temporal advantages. The Gospel of St. John said it well: "To His own He came, and His own received Him not."

A moment's reflection would make us realize where we would be without the redemption. The Church has wisely placed beside this Gospel about the curing of the lepers a passage from an epistle of Saint Paul to make us appreciate the condition of God's people *before* Christ. They were under the burden of the Old Law. They only had hope for the coming of a descendant of Abraham, for Christ. Can you imagine yourself living at that time, without the unspeakable benefits you have from Christ: being without confession, for example, so that the weight of all your past life were still on your back. Can you imagine yourself without the education you've had in the catechism so that in your ignorance you would likely gravitate towards superstition, occultism, paganism or atheism? Can you see

yourself without ever having heard sermons about prayer, love for the Blessed Sacrament, the holiness of the Virgin Mary, the lives of the saints? Where would you be without Christ and the Catholic faith, without the Holy Eucharist, without priests?

Ingratitude! God can't do more than what He's already given you, at least by way of promise. Those particular things you pray for but still lack are also yours, all according to what's in your eternal, best interest. Yet where's the gratitude?

The truly appreciative beneficiary has a difficulty in showing his gratitude. This is expressed in the verse of a psalm that the priest prays just before receiving from the chalice. *How can I make return to the Lord for all He has done for me?* The answer is also given: by taking up the chalice of salvation and invoking the name of the Lord. More prosaically this translates into the sacrifice of worship. By our fidelity to the Sunday Mass and in giving God the worship of our minds as well as our voices, we render to God what pleases Him most, since the Mass is the redemptive act of Christ's sacrifice offered anew. This Mass then is your chance to make some compensation to the much ignored but all-loving Heart of Christ for all the benefits you have received—benefits far more than you could ever number.