

Our Lady of Lourdes

Thanksgiving Day

November 25, 2009

Fr. Bob

Readings:

Sirach 50:22-24

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Luke 17:11-19

It is my hope that we come here today with a humble spirit. We come together today as our country is involved in war and we should be mindful of all those who are in harms way and pray fervently for peace. It's a time for economic turmoil, that has affected an entire world and so many are struggling to make ends meet. People, who were well of a few years ago are finding ways to do without. And we are in the midst of a national debate over health care with the overriding question for us as Christians as to how to provide for the sick, especially the poor. The list could go on. And throughout all of history there has always been something going on that causes people to struggle. So perhaps it is good that with a heart that is humble, that we gather to give god thanks for what blessings we have received. And the blessings from God are often intangible, hard to grasp and hard to remember. And the blessings are not about possessions and not about wealth. Rather, the blessings are about the God who provides what we need. We all need people in our lives who love us and understand us. We need those who are beside us in the good times and in the bad. Blessings from God are not about a promising future but instead have more to do with hope that we have for the future for a better world.

And hope is no small thing in our lives and in our world and faith in God brings the blessing of hope that sustains and nurtures us and causes us to look forward. Blessings from God are not about the things that we've accomplished but rather about the gifts provided, so that we can do many things.

In our Gospel reading today we have the story of the ten lepers who were all healed of their illness. All of them were literally brought back into the world to be part of it once again. All were able to regain their lives and their livelihood. But as always, the focus is on the one who returned to give thanks. He did not complain to God about what might have been many years of suffering. He did not lament the things that he had missed. In his own sense of wonder, he was able to stop thinking of the past, and probably with joy, had an appreciation of life that the crowd who watched, did not totally understand.

In faith, on this Thanksgiving Day, we have to respond with gratitude. It could be said, "If someone was cured of a terrible disease like leprosy, who wouldn't be grateful?" Well, we have the answer: about 90%. Nine out of ten did not return to thank Jesus. Gratitude seems obvious and easy, but it is not. It not only involves going out of our way, but it requires humility. Most of all, gratitude establishes a relationship with the giver. Gratitude is the currency of our relationship with God - and with our parents, and with our family members and with our co-workers and friends. Life is the pure gift from God. But our acknowledgement of that gift and realizing where it came from, is important. On today's observance of Thanksgiving, we recognize that gratitude is salvation. It is the joyful acceptance of God's gift of birth - and rebirth in Christ. It is not turning away from the problems of the world that are many. It is also not about what we have done for ourselves. It is about God's type of blessings that give hope, restores life and gives purpose. Like the grateful leper in today's Gospel may we hear those beautiful words with a sense of true humility: "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."