



TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle C

2 Kings 5:14-17
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, a mix of large, brightly colored autumn leaves, along with newspaper or magazine clippings of people who are often treated as “others” or “outsiders” are placed on a table covered with a green cloth.)

In this week’s scriptures we see a deepening of Naaman’s and the Samaritan leper’s faith, as well as a universal image of God’s salvation. We reflected last week on faith. Name some action you took this past week that points to the strength or weakness of your own faith. *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. As a selection of instrumental music is played, each member takes a colorful leaf from the table. Members are invited to behold the beauty of their leaf and ponder the wonder of what lay beneath the green pigment of summer. When the music is complete, the community dwells in yet another minute of quiet. A member then prays as follows.)

Psalm of the Feast of Autumn

Member: Tinted orange and yellow is the sunlight
that pours through the stained glass window webwork
of the countless gothic tree branches,
as God’s cosmic temple
celebrates the feast of autumn.
The aroma of burning leaves
fills every one of my pores,
as blue-gray clouds of autumn incense rise,
amidst the tall, tree pillars
of basilica earth.
“Holy, holy, holy are you, God of Creation,
heaven and earth are full of your glory,
holy, holy, holy are you.”

Edward Hays, **Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim**, Forest of
Peace Publishing, Leavenworth, KS, 1989

(The leaves are placed on the floor in the middle of the gathering.)

Focus Question

Describe a time when you received more than you expected.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

Autumn days bless us with bright, vibrant colors! All around us trees are dressed in multi-colored leaves; lawns and roads are covered with a blanket of falling leaves. So much that had been green has become multi-colored! Slowly and steadily, the green pigments of summer have given over to the colors that have been *hidden* underneath. Now we see the glorious color that was present all along. It is at once surprising and marvelous.

This week’s scriptures are also about seeing more than we might at first glance. Elisha the prophet, whose name means “God is salvation”, is approached by an *outsider*, Naaman, a pagan leper. Both Naaman and Elisha step beyond the social divisions of their time: Naaman, in asking for help and Elisha, in responding without judgment or prejudice. Both look beyond

the accepted social boundaries. The Samaritan leper and Jesus do the same! Boundaries are broken open and more happens than one might expect.

The Samaritan leper and Naaman are able to see more than their physical cures. The experience of physical healing leads them to more. Both are moved to faith in God who has restored their health. They come to belief, gratefulness and an awareness of being saved.

Jesus and Elisha see more than an *outsider* or the disease of leprosy in the Samaritan and Naaman. Both en flesh an image of God that is bigger and more than the limited and exclusionary image held by the community. God is acting on behalf of all. In God there is no exclusion or pre-requisite for help. Seeing more means seeing the universality of God's salvation. God's salvation is extended, not only to those who know themselves as *chosen*, but to all people, inclusively and everywhere. As today's responsorial psalm tells us, "All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God."

In these scriptures we encounter more about God's universality. We see people discovering what lies hidden beneath a physical cure. Like the green leaf of summer that reveals its deeper colors in autumn, we, too, are called to look more deeply at our images of God and at our experiences of God and life. There's always more to see if we are willing to go deeper.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Naaman and the Samaritan leper choose to allow their experiences to enrich their images of God and give deeper and broader meaning to their lives. How has some specific experience of God and life done the same for you?
- ◆ You are living a personal salvation history. What's the more that God is offering to you now?
- ◆ How is your image of God being stretched by the image of Jesus' response to the Samaritan leper?
- ◆ How universal are you about salvation? Who is in? Who is out?
- ◆ Share an experience of God that has changed your attitude toward being inclusive.

- ◆ The nine other lepers, who did not return to Jesus with gratefulness, did not look deeper than their cure. What experience of God or life might you need to look at more deeply?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Walls in border communities along the Texas-Mexico border are built to exclude "others". Migration and Refugee Services provides diocesan-run foster-care programs to shelter children and teenage refugees who cross the border into the USA. Contact them to learn about ways that you can support their ministry. Migration and Refugee Services, 3211 4th St., N. E., Washington DC 20017-1194, 202-541-3170, or perhaps some outreach sponsored by your diocese.
- ◆ Explore with your small church community its willingness to take a risk to invite some *outsider* in your parish to become a part of your small community?
- ◆ To break down stereotypes and to see the *more* of other traditions, read *The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew- Three Women Search for Understanding*, Ranya Idliby, Suzanne Oliver and Priscilla Warner, Free Press, N.Y., 2006.

CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING FORTH

(Each member takes a clipping of a person often treated as an outsider from the table and gazes at this person while the community dwells in a time of silence. After some minutes, the community prays as follows.)

All: The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Leader: Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

All: The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Leader: The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

All: The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands:
break into song; sing praise.

All: The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

*(The leader invites members to give voice to a prayer for an 'outsider' or group of 'outsiders' in today's world. To each prayer, members respond, "All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God." When the prayers are complete, The **musical** selection, "You Are Mine" is played. The song may be found on Utube. Members sing along as they are able. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)*



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