

*... one of them, when he saw he was healed,
came back, praising God in a loud voice ...*

Homily, 9th October 2016

Luke 17,11-19

Father G. Paparone o.p.

We have just listened to the passage which only Saint Luke narrates, about the physical healing of ten lepers made by the Lord; in the other Gospels, the story mentions only one leper. This story has a very significant meaning for it allows us to understand what faith and salvation are as opposed to just physical healing.

As we just heard, Jesus is walking towards Jerusalem and meets ten lepers; or rather, ten lepers come closer to him keeping a distance, because leprosy was considered an “impure” disease. This is why the ill could not socialize and would remain at a distance. In the village as well, they were separate, treated like outcasts (if we today are afraid of this disease, you can imagine in those days).

Having heard about Jesus’ reputation of being a thaumaturge, they address him in despair; they are in fact desperate, with no alternatives, no solutions.

Chances are they’d said: Jesus is passing by, the famous miracle-worker (but this is a further elaboration of the healing of the other leper which is described in the other Gospels.

Perhaps they had come to know the other leper so they get closer to Jesus apostrophizing him (it is important to notice how they address him): *Jesus, Master, have pity on us*. They address Jesus the man, the teacher, the unique man who bears this power.

Jesus sees them from afar and says: *“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”*

Here is a first step in the journey of faith.

Jesus apparently does nothing: he doesn’t touch them, nor does he celebrate a rite; simply he says: *“Go, show yourselves to the priests”*, because the priest was he whom had to certify their newly acquired purity to enable them to be readmitted into society and to normal daily life.

And these sick **trust** the Lord and his word.

One the other hand, we have just heard in the first reading, that there had been a slight hindrance in the foreign leper who had heard that in Israel a Prophet was capable of curing leprosy.

To this man, the Prophet had said to go to the river and wash himself in that water; in the beginning, Naaman “contests” this indication by stating that there was water in his country too; so what was the point of coming from afar just to bathe in a river...

But then, a servant convinces him and to entrust in the power of the man who stands before him.

Healing, therefore, happens by means of an act of faith. What is healing in both these cases is solely the interior faith in the power of God. The river’s water has no power in itself.

In this Gospel, water is not even present, there is nothing. What is made even more evident is that **healing depends on the unconditional faith that one rests on whom is inviting you to fulfil this act.**

To summarize: in the first part of this story we see the physical healing of the ten lepers through an act of faith.

*... one of them, when he saw he was healed,
came back, praising God in a loud voice ...*

Homily, 9th October 2016

Luke 17,11-19

Father G. Paparone o.p.

If the story had intended to highlight just the miracle working of Jesus, this story would have ended with the healing of the lepers.

On the contrary, **the story continues to the second parte which is the most important, for which the first is preparatory.**

Of the ten healed lepers, nine go off their road; just one of them turns back to Jesus: *One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him -and he was a Samaritan.*

So, Jesus, seeing that this Samaritan had come back to praise, whilst the other had gone off, asks: *"Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?"*

Then he says to the healed leper who was at his feet: *"Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

Therefore, there is **a different kind of faith, different from that of the first part of the story -it is this faith that stems out of the awareness of having encountered God.**

While the other healed lepers, probably were thinking he had met a miracle-worker, a man who is able to enact extraordinary deeds, finally their problem was solved, they could go back to normal life, forgetting in some way or not understanding what had really happened.

This way, they remain only physically healed, not in their soul. **They don't obtain salvation intended as a means of living a true, authentic life and a relationship with God.**

Why?

Because they hadn't fully understood what had happened.

Contrarily, what does this leper, this Samaritan do?

In the Gospels, very often it is emphasized that those who welcome Jesus, who makes a true experience of salvation, are those who seem humanly the most distant: sinners, thieves, prostitutes, in this case a Samaritan who was a heretical -today it could be a Waldensian, a Lutheran or an Evangelist...

This story is beautiful: *when he saw he was healed...*

But didn't the other see they were healed?

What is St. Luke telling us?

That this leper, seeing himself cured, began using his head!!! He starts reasoning, he questions himself: what has happened to me? How is this possible? That means therefore that Man...

He has crossed their path: *when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.*

The salvation this leper has obtained is this: to realize he had met God, and therefore praise and give thanks.

*... one of them, when he saw he was healed,
came back, praising God in a loud voice ...*

Homily, 9th October 2016

Luke 17,11-19

Father G. Papparone o.p.

Perhaps he had tried to live a new life, a different one, not merely based on his physical wellbeing, but founded on a true, authentic, meaningful relationship with God.

Hence, Jesus says to him: ***Your faith has saved you***

Which means that faith is recognizing the presence of God in a material sign.

It is this faith, capable to praise the Lord, to thank Him for his deeds, that has introduced the leper to a new way of living; meaning that from that moment on he has begun to live before the presence of God, giving thanks and praise: **this is salvation!**

I want to underline, this kind of salvation is different from simple physical healing. How many of us, perhaps, search for God simply to be physically healed? (By this I don't mean simply healing from a physical sickness, but giving a solution to our material needs.)

Many of us, during our life time have probably had the gift, the grace of receiving the solution to many difficult, painful situations; but it is possible they have forgotten to begin a new life, the true life.

How many times we have come across people who have had a real experience of encountering God, who have been uplifted, who have been comforted, have obtained something but then have gone back to their original world, who have forgotten about God and stepped away.

What was that healing worth?

What purpose did that experience serve, that moment of joy, happiness, peace?

Very little!

Well, I believe we are amongst those who have recognized and reflected; yesterday, we were considering enthusiasm, which as time goes by, dies down.

Why does this happen?

That's because we go back to our original world; perhaps we tend to forget that we have been regenerate, rejuvenated and that **salvation consists in living each day before the presence of God, giving thanks and praise.**

It is not because something new happens every day that we should give thanks and praise, but because one day we had had the gift of meeting him, of embracing him and had experienced his love.

In the Scriptures, the word "memorial" is stated, even the Eucharist is a "memorial": remember what Jesus has done for us, for humanity.

Let us remember, search our memory for what God has done for us.

*... one of them, when he saw he was healed,
came back, praising God in a loud voice ...*

Homily, 9th October 2016

Luke 17,11-19

Father G. Papparone o.p.

It is only this bright memory which is capable to shed a light on our burdens, our problems, our daily hardships.

It is only this active memory, together which praise and thanks even during hard time which can give us the strength to resist through every hardship.

The Lord states that the leper was saved in that precise moment, not in the future, a remote future, a hypothetical future: *Your faith has made you well. RIGHT NOW.*

You are healed.

What does being saved in that precise moment mean?

It means to have recognized that God has passed in my life.

He has intervened in the story of my life. That from now on I must give thanks and praise.

Hence, we are here today because we have understood that God is our strength, our Hope. I don't know if there is anyone amongst us who still hasn't received and is looking for this physical healing, but this is certainly secondary, this is relative, not useful.

What is important is to have the absolute awareness of having encountered God.

And now, here today, we also should repeat: why are we here?

The answer should be: because I have met God.

Because the Lord has come into my life and I am here to praise him, give him thanks, walk by his side.

If we have this certainty, we can also say we have entered salvation.

Let us thank the Lord then, praise him for being at his presence and if we still have doubts, let us ask the Lord, in his Eucharist that he may free us from any hesitation and that we may live everyday praising him and giving him thanks.