Father O’Connor’s Homily for 9 October 2022

Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Sunday – C

Stewardship Renewal Commitment Weekend

2 Kings 5: 14-17

2 Timothy 2: 8-13

Luke 17: 11-19

*This is our Annual Stewardship Renewal Commitment Weekend. Thank you for being a part of this great opportunity for our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families as we make our stewardship commitments together in the areas of time, talent and treasure for the next twelve months – as we strive to become even better disciples of Jesus*

*I know that many of you have brought your commitment cards with you today, all filled out. Thank you! Others of you have already mailed in your commitment cards. Thank you!*

*Perhaps you forgot to fill out a card. Well I am going to give you the opportunity to do so right here with the cards and pencils in the pews. The cards trimmed in gold are for Saint Joseph parishioners. The cards trimmed in blue are for Nativity parishioners. Just raise your hand if you need a card or a pencil and I would ask those nearby to pass one to you.*

*You can use one card for all the persons in your household – adults and young people. Please write your first name next to the ministry that you are either “already involved in” or that you are “interested in joining.”*

*At the time of the Offertory collection, we may all deposit our completed commitment cards in the basket along with our regular Offertory envelopes.*

*Since this Commitment Weekend is so important, if you have not already completed a card, I invite you to do so right now while I offer some thoughts about today’s Gospel.*

Our world proclaims this message all the time, and it is a lie: “The more power, prestige, property, popularity and stuff that you have, the happier you will be.”

Jesus teaches us differently: “The more grateful you are for all the blessings that God has given you, the happier you will be.”

Today’s Gospel lays out this lesson.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and meets ten lepers. One is a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews.

The lepers cry out, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” And Jesus did. He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” On their way there, they were all healed.

Then what? Nine of them continued on their merry way. Only one of them – the Samaritan – came back to thank Jesus. And Jesus said, “Where are the other nine? Has no one but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

This is the only time in the Gospels where Jesus ever demands thanks. All the rest of the time He leaves that act of graciousness up to us.

The lesson? Only I can make the decision to be grateful. No one can do this for me – or for you. And a grateful heart makes for a happier person.

The writer Fulton Oursler [1893-1952] was an agnostic before he became a Catholic at the age of 50. Then, astounded by how little people knew about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, he wrote his now-classic book, **The Greatest Story Ever Told** [1949].

In another piece, Oursler tells about an African-American woman who helped to raise him when he was a child. As a non-believing youth he used to mock her faith. Before every meal she would bow her head and pray, “Much obliged, Lord, for this fine food.”

One day he said to her, “The food is going to be there whether you pray or not. So why bother?”

She answered, “Food always tastes better when you have a grateful heart.” She went on, “When I was a little girl there was an old preacher who taught me a very important lesson. He said, ‘Every single day, look for God’s blessings, and thank God for them. If you look for those blessings every day you will indeed find them.’”

And then she added, “But this morning, when I was sitting on the edge of my bed, I couldn’t think of a single thing to thank God for. I thought and I thought… And then, from underneath my bedroom door, came the aroma of coffee brewing in the kitchen. And I said, ‘Much obliged, Lord, for the coffee. And much obliged for its fine smell.’”

Years later the woman was dying. And Fulton Oursler and some others were at her bedside. Fulton thought, “I wonder what she’ll find to be grateful for today.” The woman opened her eyes and looked around. She smiled and said, “Much obliged, Lord, for such fine friends!”

How was she able to do this? Every day she looked for God’s blessings in her life. And every day she found them, to the day she died – because she had a grateful heart. And she was a very happy person.

Stewardship as a way of life is all about becoming an even better disciple of Jesus each day – and, looking for God’s blessings with a grateful heart, to be a happier person.

I ask each one of you, during this Mass, this Eucharist, this supreme prayer of thanksgiving to God, to recall a blessing or two that you are especially grateful for today.

And tell Him from your heart, “Thank you, Lord. I am much obliged for all of your fine blessings.”