

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
October 9, 2016

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The incident of the ten lepers cleansed is not quite so easy to understand as it first appears. We would like to say the moral of the story is: “always remember to say thank you.” But what happened, as recorded by Saint Luke, is more complicated and more obscure. Since it is none other than the Son of God Who is the principal agent, we want to know everything He means by healing and being made whole. Why? Because everyone of us desires to live in a healed and whole state.

For openers, it is simply not warranted to say nine of the ten lepers were ungrateful. *All ten* made a great act of faith and obedience. Nothing in the way of physical healing was withheld from the nine who did not come back immediately to give thanks to Jesus. We must look at the sequence of what happened because it teaches us something to guide our own relationship to Christ.

At the outset the ten lepers did not ask for healing. *They asked for mercy*. Asking for mercy is the place from which they, and we, must start. Too often we do not only ask for solutions to our problems. We have a solution in mind and do not hesitate to include it in our prayer. But we should begin with asking for mercy and forgiveness, like the lepers, and leave the specific solution to Almighty God. After all, He knows our need even *before* we ask.

Our Lord then told the lepers to proceed as if they had indeed been healed. That is a part of the incident we so easily miss. The lepers were told to go through all the motions a man would make after he had already been healed. Jesus said “travel to Jerusalem, make a sacrifice, and obtain a certificate of cleanliness from the priests.” It is crucial to understand this scenario. These ten men had leprosy. Jesus told them to begin their trip to the temple to get certified *as if they were already healed*. What would *we* do in a similar situation? Most of us would say to Jesus, “Not so fast, Lord. That is not good enough. *Cleanse us first* before you send us away.” But the lepers did not do that. They did what Jesus told them to do. It was a great act of faith. And it reminds us of something the Blessed Lord had declared on another occasion. “All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.” (Mk 11:24). Is that what happened here?

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What about the other nine lepers, the ones who did not immediately return to give thanks. We cannot assume wholeness did not come to them as well. In fact we cannot assume *anything* more about them because they disappeared from St Luke's account. All we can say is St. Luke records one cleansed leper returned to Jesus and this man was made whole.

This wholeness is something that affects more than the body. It affects the nature of the man, body, mind, and spirit. Many people think they are whole and complete personalities. They have health, security, a good job, a nice home, and the kind of life that yields enjoyments. But God does not see as man sees. He sees the gaps in our professed wholeness. It may be that because of our very security we develop a lack of charity or compassion, a lack of concern for justice and righteousness, a lack of gratitude for what we have received, of humility before God, or knowledge of His ways. It is Almighty God Who fills these gaps with His grace. And it will happen in no other way except when we return to Him and are with Him.

It is in this sense that the tenth man cleansed, the one who returned immediately to Jesus, was pronounced whole. *It was because his life was with the Lord.*