

### Homily for November 14, 2018

Sarah is two years old, and extremely active. She is always busy, always moving and always in a hurry... because at two years of age, she already realizes that there are so many exciting things to do and see and experience in this incredible world God has given us.

One day Sarah interrupted her play-time just long enough to run into the kitchen in search of a mid-afternoon snack. Hurriedly, she said to her mother: "Banana, Momma, Banana!" Jodi, her mother, handed her a banana. Sarah quickly grabbed the banana and turned to rush back out of the kitchen. However, before she took very many steps, her mother said: "Sarah, come back. What are the magic words?" Sarah screeched to a halt, turned back around and said: "Please! Thank You! You're Welcome! God Bless You! And I Love You, Mommy!"

At this point, Sarah got a second banana!... And a warm hug!

The magic words Sarah's mother was looking for were "Thank you." She got more than that... but those were the words she was looking for... because Sarah's mother knows how important it is... for us to learn how to stop and say thanks."

St Ignatius of Loyola believed that cultivating gratitude was at the heart of maturing in the Spiritual life and conversely ingratitude was the sin most readily separating us from God.

How to we live gratefully? By living dependently.

This is the theme at the heart of all our readings today. In Titus St. Paul gives us a distillation of the Gospel and are dependence upon Jesus.

***But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.***

People cultivating a grateful attitude know how dependent they are on the goodness and loving kindness of Jesus. When this happens, we live out our baptism daily, celebrating the waters of rebirth that are then renewed as the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Psalm 23 celebrates this renewal in the language of God leading us to green pastures and still waters. For a Palestinian sheep such green pastures were hard to come by in that rough and rocky terrain. But their trusting confidence in the shepherd's care was how they remained dependent each day on his guidance. Still waters were also needed because if a very woolly sheep got caught in fast running waters, its coat would become saturated with water, and before the animal knew it would be on its back, under the water going down stream with death fast approaching.

We too need dependent and grateful hearts that keep us from being carried away by the fast waters of vice so aptly described by Paul in this vivid prose:

*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.*

Ingratitude leads to treating others with a demeaning temper whereas gratitude has a way of taming our temperament as expressed by Paul earlier in our reading:

**Speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show every courtesy to everyone.**

Those who are growing in thankfulness for and are dependent on Jesus' generosity will in turn show generosity in their dealing with others. When gratitude is the underlying attitude informing how we live, we will discover that goodness and mercy do follow us and like the Samaritan and Sarah we know thank you is a magic word allowing us to experience what it means to "dwell in the house of the Lord, my whole life long"