

NOVEMBER 10, 2021  
Memorial of St. Leo the Great, Pope & Doctor of the Church  
John 2: 13-22

“DO NOT EXCLUDE OTHERS AND ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL.”

We know that some people do not mix together because of conflict and misunderstanding, cultural background and affiliations but change over along the way of life. In our gospel, it gives us a concrete example. It speaks about an unusual and rare occasion between two groups who had been split and divided for long time. We heard the ten lepers, one Samaritan in company with nine Jews. Some people when strike by hardship, forces them to bond, do not think about barriers and walls or prejudices. They only think about their one and common welfare. In this case, asking Jesus for mercy. They called Jesus from a distance: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”<sup>1</sup>

“The word mercy literally means ‘sorrowful at heart.’ But mercy is something more than compassion, or heartfelt sorrow at another's misery and misfortune. Compassion empathizes with the sufferer. But mercy goes further - it removes suffering. Mercy is also connected with justice. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a great teacher and scripture scholar, said that mercy ‘does not destroy justice, but is a certain kind of fulfillment of justice. Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; (and) justice without mercy is cruelty.’ Mercy ‘moves us to do what we can do to help the other.’ So what is the significance of these ten lepers asking Jesus to show them mercy? They know they are in need of healing, not just physical, but spiritual healing as well. They approach Jesus with faith and with sorrow for their sins because they believe that he can release the burden of their guilt and suffering and restore both soul and body. Their request for mercy is both a plea for pardon and release from suffering. Why did only one leper out of ten return to show gratitude? Gratefulness, a word which expresses gratitude of heart and a thankful disposition, is related to grace - which means the release of loveliness. Gratitude

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 17: 13 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God.”<sup>2</sup>

My brothers and sisters, there are two things that the Lord is telling us today: do not exclude others and always be grateful. As followers of Christ, we are called to embrace every color, race, language or belief without barriers and prejudices. We need to reach out to all and must not treat others as outcast or outsiders.

Pope Leo I, the first pope to be called ‘the Great’ embodied that attitude of unity and relationship with no barriers and boundaries with others. He was gifted in bringing reconciliation between disputing groups of Christians, a peacemaker. “Along with his dynamic faith and outstanding theological wisdom, Pope Leo I was also courageous. He led Rome's defense against Attila the Hun's barbarian invasion on Italy in 452, by taking on the role of peacemaker. He focused heavily on the pastoral care of his people. He inspired and helped to foster charitable work in areas of Rome affected heavily by famine, refugees and poverty. To him, being a Christian was not only about embracing the fullness of the Gospel theologically but living it out in a world filled with hurt, suffering and needs. He was renowned for his profoundly spiritual sermons. With his words, Leo could reach the everyday needs and interests of his people. It was his reputation as an ‘instrument of the call to holiness, well-versed in Scripture and ecclesiastical awareness’ that helped him become one of the greatest popes in the history of the Church.”<sup>3</sup>

So, who are lepers today in our society? How do we treat them? Let us reflect on how we relate to others, and how we give thanks to the Lord for all His blessings to us and even to those people who helped us along the way. Let us always be grateful. May we live like St. Leo the Great who treated others without exclusion which is totally opposite to what we celebrate in this Eucharist. St. Pope Leo the Great, pray for us.

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.dailyscripture.net](http://www.dailyscripture.net)

<sup>3</sup> [www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)