

Where must we go?

A Gospel Reflection from Brian Wigger

Life throws many challenges at us. Whoever we are, and no matter how nurturing and protective our parents might be, there will always be times when things don't go according to plan. Growing up is not always easy.

In our Gospel this weekend we hear about ten lepers. These ten lepers probably had a bright future. Leprosy forced them to live apart and crushed their dreams.

They hear about Jesus and hope that somehow; he might be able to help. Keeping their distance, they cry out to him from afar, "*Master, have mercy on us*". These are the very words we speak at the beginning of Mass, "Lord have mercy" and at the Lamb of God we will sing "have mercy on us". We too may have problems in our lives separating us from God, from parents, from families, and from making friends. We, like the ten in the Gospel cry out to the Lord "*Have mercy on us*"

By this, we invite the Lord to heal us. Calling for mercy is only one part of the dynamic of making us whole. Jesus sends the ten away to show themselves to the priests. The ten obey and as they went away they became free of their leprosy. Nine are delighted that all is well and go on living their lives with their original hopes and dreams.

One of the groups, a Samaritan, recognizes that he is healed and turns back giving praise to God for his healing and falling at Jesus' feet gives him thanks. Again, the actions of this man will point to our actions at this Mass. The man returns to Jesus. This word "return" is the verb of repentance in the Old Testament. The prophets ask that the people return to the Lord their God. This is what the healed man has done. This is what we do at Mass. We with all our failings call upon the Lord for mercy and once healed take up his invitation to return to his loving embrace.

We asked and will ask for mercy. We praised God in the singing of the Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest) and we will give him thanks in our offering of the Eucharist at the altar. Let us not be like the nine healed men who went on with their lives once all was well again. The Gospel asks us not be satisfied with what the world deems success: wealth, prestige, great learning, beauty, and fitness, etc. and miss out on a living relationship with God. Let us return to worship God through, with, and in Jesus at this altar and so share in the new life He offers.

Jesus gave a similar command to the ten and to the Samaritan – go on your way. For the ten this going led only to healing and living life as normal. For the Samaritan this second going in faith led to salvation. At the end of Mass each of

us are sent our way “go in peace”. We do so in faith that we may live the full life that Jesus offers, one of Christian joy.