

2019 28th SUNDAY

Let me tell you a rather pathetic story.

A young man who had a wife and three young children was struck down with brain cancer. He was in constant pain. Doctors in the city he lived in told him that nothing could be done to cure him. However he went to a neurologist in another city who offered to operate on him but warned the man that he could well die in the operation. The young man decided to take the risk.

After nine hours of surgery, the neurologist came into the waiting room absolutely exhausted and whispered to the young man's wife, "We got it." The young man recovered and went on to lead a successful and happy life.

Twenty years later the neurologist himself died. The man's wife saw the Death Notice in the paper and said to her husband: "We must go to his funeral."

"I'd like to," said her husband; "But it's on Saturday and that's my Golf day."

Pathetic isn't he?

Just like the nine lepers in today's Gospel Story.

God has given to us, the people of Gisborne, a beautiful Waterfront.

I so much enjoy strolling down there on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, buying an ice cream and then sitting and gazing out past Young Nick's Head; reflecting; giving thanks.

I consider the majestic serenity of the sea. I see young folk cavorting on their surf boards, showing off, and having heaps of fun. I see fathers and mothers playing with their kids in the sand and I give God thanks.

I consider the warmth of the sun, the gentle breeze, the greenness of the hills and I give God thanks as do all people who see God's bountiful generosity reflected in the beauty of creation.

I consider the wonderful people who share my life with me here in Gisborne and who love me in spite of my crankiness. And I give God thanks.

And then, inevitably, I consider how God in an act of inexpressible love became human; how He suffered and died a horrible death which has given me the glorious promise of life beyond the grave. And I give God thanks.

It is so easy to become self-absorbed. It is so easy to ignore God completely in our lives and never to give thanks. G.K. Chesterton once wrote: "The worst moment for an atheist is when he or she feels a profound sense of gratitude and has no one to thank."

Yes, we need to give ourselves quiet moments when we can give God thanks; when we really **see** the God-given beauty and goodness which surrounds us; and give thanks.

It is all so easy to be blind to the goodness in others and to forget to give them thanks.

At School we judge a teacher to be an enemy because of the D's he scrawls at the bottom of our assignments; neglecting to see the dedicated person who has laboured long into the night trying- unsuccessfully- to make sense of what we have written.

We label our neighbours as worthless because their lawns are a perpetual mess and neglect to see the gentle and compassionate parents they are to their children.

In the Gospel St Luke writes: "Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him."

Notice that the healed leper does two things: He **praises** God at the top of his voice and he bows at Jesus' feet **thanking** Him for His part in the miracle. Thanking and praising are related but different.

At the end of a meal we can say: "Thank-you dear for the meal." That is thanking.

Or we could say: "That apple pie was absolutely delicious. My dear, you are a wonderful cook." That is praising.

We go to a concert. At the end if we clap gently and slowly, we are giving thanks. But if clap loudly and enthusiastically- then we are giving praise.

God is a God of luxuriant generosity. God deserves more than just our thanks; God deserves our praise.

It is our duty to praise God. Yes it **is** our duty. Of this Jesus reminds us when He says: "It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God except this foreigner."

It is our privilege and our joy, week after week, year after year, to gather as a Community to give God thanks and praise. At every Mass we sing heartily: "Glory to God in the Highest- we praise You, we bless You, we adore You, we glorify You, we give You thanks for Your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God Almighty Father." Later on at Mass we sing in exaltation: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest." And in the Preface leading into the Eucharistic Prayer,

the priest proclaims on our behalf: “It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Father Most Holy.”

We come to Mass for much the same reason as that golf-crazy man in my opening story should have gone to the funeral of the neurologist who saved his life - as a sign of thanks and as an opportunity to give praise. Why should we? Because it is human and natural to do so. It is also our duty and will bring about our salvation.