

Thanksgiving Day

Cycle A

November 24, 2011

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

“Thank you”

I suppose that every language has a word for expressing gratitude.

These are simple, basic words, like: *“Thank you; Merci; Grazie; Gratias; Danke”* – on and on we could go. Saying *“thank you”* is something that our parents taught us from the time we were little children.

If I just think about it, how many hundreds of times my parents told me, *“Now remember to say thank you.”* And yet, for many of us this does not become a habit.

The famous General George Patton of World War II comments on this in his memoirs. He recalls one time when he sent a soldier to a rest camp after a prolonged period of active service.

When the soldier returned, he wrote a letter to General Patton thanking him for the fine care. Patton wrote back and told the young man that for thirty-five years he had always tried to provide well for his soldiers, but this was the first letter of thanks he had ever received.

Thinking Leads to Thanking

So, maybe a good question for today is: how can we become more grateful and more expressive of our gratitude?

There is a popular book entitled *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, and the author Richard Carlson proposes a solution. Carlson says: spend a moment every day thinking of someone to thank.

Carlson says this is the key. Thinking people will become thanking people.

Carlson says that this may sound like an awfully simple solution, but it works. He also recommends that it is helpful to make a habit of beginning each day thinking of someone to thank.

It can be your spouse, best friend, mother or father, son or daughter, brother or sister, someone at work, a teacher, a coach, a doctor, whomever. So, begin each day thinking of someone to thank and then thank that person at least in our own mind and heart.

This practice can lift much of the negativity and darkness that can cloud our lives and make us much more positive persons. It will also let others know how much they are valued and appreciated.

Thanking Leads to Believing

Then, as kind of a next step, our thanking also leads to believing.

Thanking is not just good manners. It enriches and strengthens our relationships with one another.

And, on a spiritual level, thanking also leads us to God. It awakens and enhances our relationship with God and that of course is the core of faith and believing.

In today's gospel, the one leper realizes that he has been healed. He then returns to Jesus to give thanks and, as he does that, he comes to faith.

He recognizes the divine power at work in Jesus. Jesus in turn praises him not just for coming back to say "*Thank you,*" but also for his faith.

Jesus even says, "*Your faith has been your salvation.*" So, thinking leads to thanking and thanking leads to believing.

Eucharist

This morning, as we celebrate the Eucharist, we participate in this movement.

First, we think. In the Word of God that we heard and in the Eucharistic Prayer that we will offer in just a few minutes, we think and remember the great saving deeds that God has done throughout history.

As we recall God's great deeds, our thinking leads to thanking. In fact, the word *Eucharist* is the Greek word for thanks.

And then, we receive the Eucharist and this communion unites us with Jesus. It nourishes our relationship with God.

It enlivens our faith. So again, thinking leads to thanking and thanking leads to believing.

This is what lies underneath our Thanksgiving Day. And this is why it is so appropriate for us to be here in worship this morning.

Readings: **Colossians 3.12-17**
 Luke 17.11-19