

Thanksgiving Eucharist

November 2008 – Year A

Deuteronomy 8:7-18

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Luke 17:11-19

In the name of the one who blesses us and bestows upon us all that we need and ask for.
Amen.

I recently came across a quote by Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century Christian theologian and mystic. He wrote, “If the only prayer you say in your whole life is ‘Thank You,’ that would suffice.”

What a powerful sentence that is! I had to really stop and think about this. If the only prayer I say in my whole life is “THANK YOU” that would suffice?

How many prayers have I said in my life? Prayers of lament, and petition, asking God for relief from my distress, begging or pleading for my wants, needs, desires, asking for guidance, patience, wisdom, direction and answers, prayers to help make me a better person and stronger in my faith, advocating for others, asking protection or healing for myself and those I love, or screaming for peace and justice in the world, for a change in government or church leadership, demanding to know why or how long! The list could go on and on.

And these are just the prayers that go on in my head that nobody else but God hears. What about all the corporate prayers I have said aloud with others in liturgies, prayer services and other church events? Written words formed into prayers for many things. Many years of repetition, psalms recited – some that resonated within me and some that did not. How many prayers of the people have I heard? Sometimes joining in those prayers while at other times tuning them out as my mind wandered elsewhere.

But isn't this what we are supposed to do? To send all of these prayers to God who we hope and believe will hear and answer them, even if the response comes back to us in ways we don't expect or want to hear? Isn't that what St. Paul reminds us to do – to pray without ceasing?

And how many prayers have been answered? I do not recall; perhaps all, certainly some, but it hasn't been none at all! How often do I remember that my previous prayers were answered and so take the time to say Thank You God? Or do I just take any reply that I received for granted and then move on to my next barrage of requests?

Have I, have we said thank you to God today? Are we thankful for another day of life? Do we appreciate being able to get out of bed and walk or talk or take a hot shower? Are we thankful for the food we eat the safe places that we live, for the bed we sleep on, for the partner, child or family member that supports and loves us?

By paying attention to the details of how others care for us as well as the many good things that we already have and experience every day, we become more aware of the many blessings that we have. We may even begin to focus on our own good fortune rather than on our problems or worrying about things we don't have. If we enter into this practice consistently, feelings of gratitude can and will permeate our lives. We will automatically become thankful and the words "Thank You" will be forever imprinted on our hearts, minds and lips.

Now this may sound very easy to accomplish, but history shows that this is not so simple. Take for example our first reading from Deuteronomy. Moses tells all the people of Israel that the Lord is bringing them into a good land, a land flowing with streams, springs and underground waters, a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey, a land where you will eat your fill, where there is no scarcity, a land where you will lack nothing! God promises to bless the people with everything they could possibly need or want.

But are they thankful for these gifts? Unfortunately, we hear time and time again, how the people grumbled against Moses and God and were NOT thankful for the blessings they received. Moses has to remind the people to not think or say that it is their own power and the might of their own hand that has brought them this wealth, but remember that it is the Lord your God who gives it to you!

Likewise, in our lesson from second Corinthians, we hear that God is able to provide us with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, we may share abundantly with others. All we have to do is overflow with thanksgivings to God!

Our gospel also talks about the need for us to be thankful for the blessings we have received. In this scenario, Jesus was approached by 10 lepers who pleaded for healing. Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priests and on the way all 10 were healed. However, only one of them came back to thank Jesus, and he was a foreigner – a Samaritan. Jesus asks about the other 9 – weren't they made clean as well? Where are they? Cannot they give thanks for an answered prayer request?

It seems that all of these people in the scriptures today, who received such blessings from God, chose not to be thankful for the gifts bestowed upon them. Is it any wonder that we still make this same mistake today?

For in the Divine plan, all people will share equally in the gifts that are given so everyone's needs are met. We are all called to be thankful and rejoice forever in what God has done and continues to do.

In order to achieve this though, we must begin with the recognition that our entire created world – plants, animals, humans and all of nature – in short, everything on our planet - is

a gift from a generous and giving God. When we have this understanding at the very core of our being, we begin to see everything in terms of gifts received and gifts to be shared.

All that is asked of us in return is to be: **THANKFUL** for receiving them; **RESPONSIBLE** in using them; and **GENEROUS** in sharing these gifts with others. So as we celebrate this Thanksgiving Holiday, let us be sure to take a moment every day to be thankful for the many blessings that we have received.

And in the words of Meister Eckhart, if the only prayer we utter this week or the rest of our lives is **THANK YOU**, it will be enough!

THANKS BE TO GOD!