

Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
For the 28th Sunday in Ordinary time
Holy Family Catholic Church, Jacksonville
October 12, 2013
Holy Rosary Catholic Church
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Texts:

2 KGS 5:14-17

2 TM 2:8-13

LK 17:11-19

In the early seventies, in a neighborhood in Krakow, the Communists wanted to start a new city. In their mind, it was to be a post religious city – a modern city that is completely secular. There would not be any Christmas references. But there was a four-acre space completely empty. Then it began the game of the cross. People would put one up, and then the government would take it away. This went on for several months. The young bishop of Krakow then began asking to celebrate a Christmas Eve Mass on the ground. To make the story short, a church was finally built. Since it all began with putting a cross in spite of the secularist opposition, the new church was enshrined with a huge, immense majestic cross. One could then say that the city was from then on open to the city of God.

When I say, I believe it is the same as saying I trust. And I need to express this deep conviction in visible ways, tangible ways, that is ...through mediations.

Today we are presented with two sets of persons who are lepers and want desperately to be healed: one who is a VIP. He comes from the powerful country of Syria who at the exhortation of his helpers comes to tiny Israel. He brings with him an impressive caravan of goodies in stock to seek favors for his healing. The other story is also about a leper who comes from an unpopular, despised territory – Samaria.

The other day I was talking to someone who had made a Christ Renews His Parish (CHRP) weekend. Her faith was so renewed that now she is in charge of recruiting others. But she tells me, men are so hard to recruit, they say, in CHRP, there is hugging...hugging ...oh no, forget it.

The people are open to renewal but they are wrapped up in a package. As if I like the gift but do not open the box because I do not like how it is wrapped up...same thing happened to the Syrian VIP leper, did he not say: I have come so far just to throw myself in this tiny river?

Cardinal Jean Danielou, a great French theologian called this reluctance, this attitude that exists in all of us, of finding excuses to conceal our fear of God or fear of change as “the scandal of the incarnation.” God saves us through very ordinary, concrete, simple ways: water, bread, oil, a word, a gesture...

Take for instance the sacrament of confession. A penitent may come with the worst list of sins but if he repents and believes, he is completely forgiven by the words of a sacrament when a priest in the name of the church says over him the name of Triune God. The internal desire for mercy needs the concrete mediation of this very simple sacrament.

The same could be said about the Holy Rosary. For elite Catholics this devotion may seem as too simple. Yet this very melodic, even repetitious prayer connects the believer with the great mysteries of our salvation. As Pope Paul VI said, “the rosary is the Gospel in synthesis. I am impressed by these parents who pray the rosary as they take their children to school in the car. The rosary is so flexible. I do pray it daily as I do my daily early morning walk.”

In today's Gospel, the lepers were healed because they did trust in the words of Jesus, go to the priest, but the Samaritan was also blessed by the gift of gratitude, a wonderful gift. He returns to give thanks to the Savior. What is the meaning of the Greek word Eucharist? Gratitude! Jesus rejoices over all of you here present coming to give thanks not annually as we do in this great country with the holiday of Thanksgiving but weekly as we do as Christians on the first day of the week, each week. But Jesus' loving concern is for those who did not come! And the others, he asked. This can also become our urgent concern, the others who did not come.

Let us share with them the words of scripture, let us share our faith, let us invite them, come to give thanks, come, come to the Light!”