

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Lectionary: 144

Reading I - [2 Kings 5:14-17](#)

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy. Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant." Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;" and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused. Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4](#) R. (cf. 2b) The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Reading II - [2 Timothy 2:8-13](#)

Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory. This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him he will deny us. If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Gospel - [Luke 17:11-19](#)

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

It's about Gratitude...

Gratitude is a virtue that needs daily nurturing if it's going to be a defining part of our fundamental disposition. Otherwise, from childhood into adulthood we become increasingly indifferent and sometimes worse, think that God, our parents, the world – owes us everything. We become blind and deaf to the source of all that is, even ourselves. The results of failing to daily nurture this virtue are documented in St. Paul's letter to the Romans: *"So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened"*.¹

It wasn't so in our beginning. Human hearing develops in our mother's womb as early as 16 weeks, allowing us to hear internal body sounds like mom's heartbeat and voice. Then, after about 23 weeks, we hear external voices. At birth, our hearing is fully formed, and we can distinguish our mother's voice from other sounds. We start to recognize and become familiar with the sound of their mother's voice and the general patterns of the native language. After we're born, our favorite sounds are human voices, especially mom and dad. We're also eager to respond to other sounds as we begin to figure out what it all means. By the end of 3 months, we begin to see and recognize the world around us. We can follow a moving object, are more interested in shapes and patterns, and can spot familiar faces, even at a distance. Human faces are one of our favorite things to look at, especially our own or a parent's face. Our disposition seems to be unceasing wonder, awe, and gratitude.

Parents are awed at the wonder of new life growing in the womb and moved to deep and inexpressible emotions at the sight of their newborn. They are filled with gratitude, realizing how fearfully and wonderfully made we and all of God's works are, a parent who knows Christ might pray with the psalmist: *"I thank you Lord with all my heart; in the presence of the angels to you I sing; I bow low toward your holy temple; I praise your name for your mercy and faithfulness; for you have exalted over all your name and your promise."*²

As we begin to see and hear clearly, we marvel endlessly at it all. As we grow and our 'world' expands, we joyfully immerse ourselves in creation. The more we learn and understand alongside being taught to whom we ought to be grateful for it all, we are humbled and amazed by it all. The seemingly infinite complexity of the cosmos and the beautifully intricate complexity of ourselves – mind, body, and soul.

The readings this weekend invite us to reflect on our human experiences of ourselves, each other, creation and God. To reflect on them in a way that stirs up once again, renews our wonder and awe. Our joy. To consider all we must be grateful for and once again, to whom we ought to be grateful first and foremost. Although an innate disposition as a baby, we all tend to grow away from this virtue of gratitude. A virtue which helps us experience the interior joy that comes from knowing we are loved by God, without limits or conditions.

In the first reading we hear that Naaman is so thankful for his healing that he becomes a believer in the God of Israel, rejecting his former religious tradition. He is full of joy and wants to show his gratitude to Elisha, but Elisha affirms that Naaman's healing is not his doing, it is the God of Israel who healed him. Naaman then emphasizes his gratitude to God by proclaiming his fidelity. David the Psalmist is thankful and in Psalm 98 invites us to join him in his hymn of joyful gratitude, praising God's faithfulness, mercy, and love – that saves. He invites the whole of creation to spare nothing in the exclamation of God's greatness. St. Paul is thankful. In the second reading he expresses the joy that sustains him during difficult times, demonstrating his gratitude for his salvation and expressing the trust he has in God who is ever

¹ [Romans 1:20-21](#)

² [Psalm 138:1-2](#)

faithful. In the Gospel reading the leper is so thankful that, filled with joy, he comes back to Jesus and falls at the feet of Jesus, the true High Priest, and thanks him for healing him, demonstrating his faith, and in response to which Jesus declares his salvation.

St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, reminds us that gratitude is not merely a fleeting feeling but a stable moral habit that shapes our whole life of prayer, worship, and service. This is because it is *“In him we live and move and have our being...”*³ So, we consider it a virtue. This gratitude of the highest order results in our persistent awareness, St. Paul reminds us in his first letter to the Thessalonians, that everything about our lives ought to move us *“in all circumstances [to] give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”*⁴ This gratitude is a moral virtue rooted in the very understanding of God as the source of all good things. As a virtue, gratitude orders the heart toward God, aligning our desires with God’s generosity and prompting us to give back in love. The Catechism, echoing scripture, teaches that the Christian life ought to be in its entirety, one unceasing act of thanksgiving.⁵

The virtue of gratitude flows from a conscious recognition that all we possess is a divine gift, a realization that leads to a *“heartfelt shout of thanksgiving”* before the Creator. It is cultivated in us through concrete practices: attentive prayer, reverence, and especially the regular participation in the Eucharist, where we *“give thanks to the Lord our God”*⁶ Pope Francis emphasized that gratitude expresses the certainty of being loved, turning our lives into a continual *“thank you”* to God and to those who share His love with us.⁷

When gratitude becomes a stable virtue, it produces several fruits. We will experience deeper communion with God, since thanksgiving opens us to the grace that transforms us into Christ’s likeness. The humility we all must seek, becomes increasingly realized as we recognize that all we have is freely given by God and this prevents pride and fosters a spirit of dependence on God. Experiencing deeper communion with God and being more humbly disposed to God, we become more generous. The awareness of receiving undeserved gifts from God necessarily leads us to want to share them, especially through the Church’s mission. All of this leads to the possession of greater joy and peace. A grateful heart perceives God’s presence even in suffering, aligning with the promise that *“every joy and suffering...can become the matter for thanksgiving”*.⁸

Gratitude is such an important virtue, that God desired it to be at the very center of our worship, where it would be nurtured most fully in the Eucharist. The very word Eucharist means “thanksgiving.” Pope John Paul II explained that gratitude *“lies at the root of the very word ‘Eucharist’”* and that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is the primary occasion in which this virtue is formed and lived out.⁹ This is why we don’t just to stay home and say some prayers, go to the mountains and enjoy the view, or watch online when there is no need or reason. Those are good things to do, at appropriate times, but what happens here, as we gather together in the Church goes much, much deeper. The Roman Missal’s Common Preface affirms that our thanksgiving, though unnecessary for God, is a “gift” that transforms us into the likeness of Christ.¹⁰ Since Christ is really and completely present in this blessed sacrament, so are all of Christ’s actions and prayers, most especially, his self-sacrifice on the cross. By uniting our minds and hearts - and even our bodies, through Holy Communion - to Christ’s own self-offering in the Eucharist,

³ [Acts 17:28](#)

⁴ [1 Thessalonians 5](#)

⁵ [Catechism of the Catholic Church 2648](#)

⁶ [Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday, 2005 2](#)

⁷ [General Audience of 30 December 2020: Catechesis on prayer - 20. The prayer of thanksgiving](#)

⁸ [Catechism of the Catholic Church 2648](#)

⁹ https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20050313_priests-holy-thursday.html

¹⁰ [The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church 30](#)

our human prayer of thanksgiving becomes divine. And so, we can say thank you to God as we ought to, in accord with a deep desire, and as God truly desires and deserves. And we can only do this here, at Mass.

Even though many of us habitually dip our fingers into the holy water fonts as we enter the Church and make the sign of the cross, we often forget to be grateful for the grace of our baptism. We often forget just what our baptism means! Pope Leo XIV mentioned recently that the sacrament of baptism pulls us out of the culture of death. He said: *“Baptism ushers us into communion with Christ and gives us life. It commits us to renounce a culture of death that is so prevalent in our society. This culture of death manifests itself today through indifference, contempt for others, drugs, the pursuit of an easy life, a sexuality that becomes entertainment and the objectification of the human person, injustice, and so on.”*¹¹ We should, like the Samaritan, return often in prayer to give thanks to God for having been washed clean of original sin. As well, we ought to remember to be grateful and say thank you to God after every good confession, where we are able to unburden ourselves from sin and receive grace and mercy, freed to live authentic human lives and faithfully build the kingdom of God on earth – at the center of which is a culture of life.

A Summary of the Homily: Gratitude as a Moral Virtue

1.0 Introduction: Understanding Gratitude as a Foundational Virtue

Gratitude is a virtue that requires daily nurturing if it is to become a defining part of our fundamental disposition. Without this intentional cultivation, we risk becoming spiritually blind and deaf to the source of all that is. As St. Paul warned the Romans, when people fail to give thanks, they become lost: “for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened” (Romans 1:21). This spiritual darkness stands in stark contrast to the state in which we begin. A child’s first experiences are of pure reception and wonder. Hearing develops in the womb, distinguishing the mother’s voice from all other sounds. After birth, vision sharpens, and a baby marvels at the world, especially at the faces of its parents. This innate disposition is one of unceasing wonder, awe, and gratitude.

Gratitude, therefore, is not merely a fleeting feeling but a stable moral habit that shapes a life of prayer, worship, and service. It is rooted in the profound understanding of God as the source of all good things. This virtue orders the heart toward God, aligning our desires with His generosity and prompting us to give back in love. When gratitude becomes a stable and defining virtue in a person's life, it produces several tangible spiritual fruits, which this guide will now explore.

2.0 The Spiritual Fruits of a Grateful Heart

When gratitude is cultivated from a simple disposition into a stable moral virtue, it yields transformative effects in the spiritual life. These effects, or fruits, deepen one's relationship with God and reshape one's engagement with the world, as seen throughout the witness of Scripture.

2.1 Deeper Communion with God

A heart filled with thanksgiving opens itself to the grace that transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. This act of opening the heart fosters a direct and deeper communion with Him. We see this in the life of Naaman the Syrian, who, after being healed, was so filled with gratitude that he rejected his former religion and became a believer in the God of Israel, entering into a new communion of faith.

2.2 The Realization of Humility over Pride

The virtue of gratitude is a powerful antidote to pride. By consistently recognizing that all possessions, talents, and blessings are freely given gifts from God, the grateful soul cultivates humility. This realization prevents pride from taking root and fosters a spirit of healthy and loving dependence on the Creator as the source of all that is good.

¹¹ [Pope Leo XIV to Newly Baptized Neophytes from France July 29th, 2025](#)

2.3 An Increase in Generosity

A grateful disposition necessarily leads to greater generosity. The profound awareness of having received countless undeserved gifts from God creates a compelling desire to share those gifts with others. This generous spirit finds its expression in acts of charity, service, and a joyful desire to support the Church's mission in the world.

2.4 The Possession of Greater Joy and Peace

A grateful heart is able to perceive God's presence even in the midst of trials. The healed leper in the Gospel, so overcome with thankful joy, returns to fall at the feet of Jesus. Likewise, St. Paul reveals that gratitude is what sustains him during difficult times. This perspective aligns with the Church's teaching that "every joy and suffering...can become the matter for thanksgiving" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2648), leading to the possession of a profound and durable joy and peace that transcends worldly conditions.

3.0 The Cultivation of Gratitude: Practices and Sacraments

The virtue of gratitude, like any virtue, is nurtured through intentional, concrete practices and engagement with the spiritual life of the Church, particularly through the sacraments.

3.1 Foundational Daily Practices

Two fundamental practices are essential for cultivating a disposition of gratitude in daily life:

- **Attentive Prayer:** This involves a conscious and deliberate effort in daily prayer to recognize and specifically thank God for His gifts, both great and small.
- **Reverence:** This is an attitude of awe, respect, and wonder for God as the creator and the source of all that is good in the world and in one's own life.

3.2 The Eucharist: The Apex of Thanksgiving

The Eucharist holds the central role in nurturing the virtue of gratitude. The very word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." As Pope John Paul II taught, gratitude "lies at the root of the very word 'Eucharist'," and the Mass is the primary occasion where this virtue is formed. This is because in the Mass, our thanksgiving is perfected. By uniting our minds and hearts to Christ's own perfect self-offering on the cross, made present in the Eucharist, our limited human prayer becomes divine. Only here, in this sacred mystery, are we able to thank God as He truly deserves.

3.3 Gratitude for the Sacraments of New Life and Mercy

Beyond the Eucharist, the sacraments of Baptism and Confession are profound sources of grace for which we must cultivate gratitude.

- **Baptism:** We must be ever grateful for the gift of **new life** received in Baptism. As the Church teaches, this sacrament "ushers us into communion with Christ and gives us life." It also commits us to renounce a culture of death, which manifests itself through "indifference, contempt for others, drugs, the pursuit of an easy life, a sexuality that becomes entertainment and the objectification of the human person, injustice, and so on."
- **Confession:** In the sacrament of **mercy**, we receive a gift for which we ought to be profoundly grateful. In Confession, we are able to unburden ourselves from sin and receive grace, freed to live authentic human lives and faithfully build the kingdom of God on earth, which is centered on a culture of life.

4.0 Conclusion: A Life of Unceasing Thanksgiving

As the Catechism teaches, the Christian life is intended to be an "unceasing act of thanksgiving" (CCC 2648). Gratitude is not a peripheral emotion but the very heart of a life reoriented toward God. This guide invites you to embrace this path—to cultivate gratitude through daily prayer and reverence and to draw deeply from the grace of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. By doing so, we open ourselves to a transformed relationship with God, one that bears the beautiful spiritual fruits of humility, generosity, and an abiding joy and peace that the world cannot give.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Baptism	The sacrament that "ushers us into communion with Christ and gives us life." It commits the baptized to renounce a "culture of death" and is a reason for gratitude for being washed clean of original sin.
Catechism	A source of teaching that, echoing scripture, affirms that the Christian life ought to be an "unceasing act of thanksgiving." It also teaches that every joy and suffering can become the matter for thanksgiving (CCC 2648).
Culture of Death	A societal condition described by Pope Leo XIV that "manifests itself today through indifference, contempt for others, drugs, the pursuit of an easy life, a sexuality that becomes entertainment and the objectification of the human person, injustice, and so on." Baptism commits one to renounce this culture.
Disposition	A person's inherent quality of mind and character. The text states that as babies, our disposition is one of "unceasing wonder, awe, and gratitude," but this can fade into indifference without nurturing.
Eucharist	The central act of Christian worship, whose very name means "thanksgiving." It is where the virtue of gratitude is nurtured most fully, as it unites the worshipper's thanksgiving to Christ's own self-offering, making the prayer divine.
Fruits of Gratitude	The positive outcomes of cultivating gratitude as a stable virtue. These include deeper communion with God, increased humility, greater generosity, and the possession of joy and peace.
Gratitude	A moral virtue rooted in the understanding of God as the source of all good things. It is described as a stable moral habit that shapes one's life of prayer and service, ordering the heart toward God and prompting a desire to give back in love.
Humility	A fruit of gratitude that is realized when one recognizes that all they have is freely given by God. This recognition prevents pride and fosters a spirit of dependence on God.
Virtue	A stable moral habit that shapes one's life. Gratitude is considered a virtue, not merely a fleeting feeling, because it orders the heart toward God and prompts a persistent awareness that all of life is a gift.

Scriptural References Cited

Reference	Context from the Document
Romans 1:20-21	Used by St. Paul to document the results of failing to nurture gratitude: "for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened."
Psalms 138:1-2	A prayer a parent who knows Christ might pray, expressing gratitude for the wonder of a newborn child: "I thank you Lord with all my heart; in the presence of the angels to you I sing..."
Psalms 98	The psalm in which David invites all of creation to join in a hymn of joyful gratitude, praising God's faithfulness, mercy, and saving love.
Acts 17:28	Cited by St. Paul to explain why gratitude is a stable habit that shapes our lives: "In him we live and move and have our being..."
1 Thessalonians 5	Used by St. Paul to remind believers that their persistent awareness of God's gifts should move them to "in all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."