

Thanksgiving

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1st Reading Colossians 3:12–17

Gospel Luke 17:11–19

What is it about saying “Thank you” that is so hard? If you follow the advice columnists in the Post, you’ll find plenty of discussions about missing “Thank you”’s, generally coming from some one who feels they were owed one and didn’t get it. In my own experience, most of these complainers are older individuals who are complaining about how “young people” or “kids” have become selfish and thoughtless, taking gifts or acts of kindness as their due and not having the consideration to say a simple “Thank you.” The complainer, of course, would never be so heartless, not even when they were the age of the person they are complaining about. In fact, back when they were that age, *everybody* was generally more thoughtful and much more responsible about saying “Thank you” when it was warranted.

Personally, I think those complainers need to have the prescription on their rose colored glasses checked. I won’t contest that certain forms for the process of thanking people, such as Thank you cards, may have been more commonly used at certain points in history, including, perhaps, the complainers’ youth. However, it only takes a look at the book of Psalms to realize that giving proper thanks has *always* been relatively rare, or at least underrepresented. There are about 30ish psalms of thanksgiving. Compare that to the 60ish psalms of lament, basically complaint, or the other 60ish psalms related to liturgy, worship, or praise, what we might call celebratory psalms. It seems clear from this sample that some 3000 years ago offering thanks to God, wasn’t a much higher priority than it is now.

Or look at today’s gospel, some 2000 years ago. Ten lepers were cleansed, but only one came back to offer thanks. It is no wonder that St. Paul felt the need to specifically instruct the Colossian community to be thankful. If anyone has warrant for complaining that He doesn’t get the thanks He deserves, it’s God. So as we gather here today on the day our country explicitly puts aside for offering thanks, let us put God at the top of the list of people we need to thank and commit ourselves to remembering that on more than just today. For the thanks we owe to God encompasses our whole life. Let us endeavor to make the act of giving thanks characteristic of that life.