

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

In today's Gospel, we hear that familiar story of the ten lepers who were cured of their illness by Jesus. Jesus makes a big deal of the fact that only one returns to give thanks to God. Isn't it interesting that Jesus makes such a big deal over gratitude and lack thereof?

I've mentioned before that I am reading *One Thousand Gifts* by Ann Voskamp (don't judge me for taking so long!). In it, she speaks about how someone challenged her to count out 1,000 gifts from God for which she is thankful. As she does it, she finds that her perspective on life changes: she begins *looking* for the gifts of God in the everyday; she is less grouchy about how things don't go right, and more joy-filled for all of the graces God *has* given her, and continues to pour upon her. She reflects on this:

**With an expiration of less than twelve hours, what does Jesus count as all most important?
“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them...” (Luke 22:19 NIV) ...
In the original language, “he gave thanks” reads “*eucharisteo*.” ... The root word of
eucharisteo is *charis*, meaning “grace.” Jesus took the bread and saw it as *grace* and gave
thanks. ... It also holds its derivation, the Greek word *chara*, meaning “joy.” *Joy*. Ah ... yes.
I might be needing me some of that. ... Was this the clue to the quest of all most important?
Deep *chara* joy is found only at the table of the *euCHARisteo* – the table of thanksgiving. I
sit there long ... wondering ... is it that simple?
Is the height of my *chara* joy dependent on the depths of my *eucharisteo* thanks?
*So then as long as thanks is possible ... I think this through. As long as thanks is possible,
then joy is always possible. Joy is always possible.***

When I first read this, I was amazed and in awe. I always knew that Eucharist means “Thanksgiving,” but I never connected *thanks* with *joy*. Isn't this what we all need? Isn't this for what we are all searching?! **JOY!**

Think about this: all the times that we think how much happier we would be **if only**... hmm... **if only** we had this car, this house, a more stable work environment, a better vacation, a different spouse, a pain free body... The list could go on and on. The “**if onlys**” end up making us more miserable, for we lose track of the gifts, the graces we have right in front of us. We *can* find joy everywhere and in all things. There were people who lived through the terror of Nazi Concentration Camps and those who lived through the Soviet Gulag who claimed to be able to find joy. Wow! Here is the truth: **we can find joy all the time, in all things, everywhere, no matter what the circumstances.** It can be found in how we recognize the gifts God has poured upon us, and continues to pour upon us each day.

I think this is the reason Jesus made such a big deal about gratitude. Sometimes we think of Jesus asking for our thanks because He would be hurt if He is forgotten. “Poor Jesus, He gave so much and never got a “Thank You” card from His kids.” AS IF! Rather, Jesus' greatest joy is *our joy*! God **wants** us to be happy, joyful! He knows we receive joy not by griping about what we don't have, but by gratitude – *eucharisteo* – for what we *do* have.

The greatest gift that God gave us was the gift of Eternal Life. He poured out this gift to us from the Cross, and makes the gift new, alive, infusing us with this gift in the Mass as we receive the Eucharist – the Thanksgiving of God!

May we truly find *joy*, by always recognize the gifts God give us – both great and small – and especially the gift of the Eucharist, whereby we enter into God's Thanksgiving, we enter into God's **JOY!**