



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel today is the same Gospel we use on Thanksgiving. After Jesus cleanses the lepers, only one returns to thank him for what he did. The Scripture actually says, **“And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God...”** (Luke 17:15).

I’m getting ready for a week of continuing education at the Theology of the Body Institute in Pennsylvania, and will be taking a course called “Theology of the Body and the Interior Life.” As I prepare for this course, I have had to read a few books on Ignatian Spirituality (spirituality based on the teaching of St. Ignatius of Loyola). One of the important aspects of this spirituality is the *Examen* prayer, whereby, in prayer, you mentally go through your day to see how you have responded or not responded to grace. Key to this is *awareness, noticing*. By praying the *Examen*, you begin to notice more clearly God’s actions and your responses.

All of this is to say that I noticed noticing in the Gospel today. St. Luke does not mention that the other nine lepers realized they were healed, but this tenth one, the Samaritan, did. Why? We don’t know. But it is an invitation for us actively to notice God’s loving work in our lives. Do we see Him at work? He is. He is pouring out His love upon you and me every day. We can notice His love in beauty, in the circumstances of our lives, in how He cares for us.

But do we notice?

The genius of St. Ignatius is that through the *Examen* we are trained to notice God’s movement in our lives, to *realize* His love IS moving – not just in the abstract, but in concrete ways in our day to day life. The more we notice His love, the more we will have hope and trust in the God who is so devoted to us.

The first part of the *Examen* is go through the last 24 hours, and to spend time thanking God for what He has done for you. So first you notice what He’s done, then you thank Him. Gratitude is a huge part of growth in relationship with God. If you’re in relationship with people who are constantly doing good things for you, and you either take them for granted or don’t even notice what they do, how long do you think it will be before they get frustrated? (Parents: you know this feeling all too well!!!) While God doesn’t get frustrated with us, He does love us so much, He wants for us to excel, to grow, to become the best version of ourselves. When we don’t, He longs for us to become the best. So when we fail in gratitude, we limp in the spiritual life for we are failing to acknowledge truth. What do I mean by that? The truth is that we can do *nothing* without God (see John 15:5). His active, loving will allows us to breath, to think, to exist. Without that constant outpouring of His love in each moment of our lives, we would cease to exist – not die, but just NOT BE! His love is constantly loving us into existence, which means we are contingent (to use the technical word) on Him. The world tries to teach us we are independent and don’t need God, whereas gratitude helps us recognize the truth that we are absolutely dependent on God for existence.

I invite you this week to spend some time every day (yes, every day) examining the previous 24 hours. In that time, ask God to help you *notice* all of the many and sundry ways that He has been loving you in that time, and spend time *thanking* Him for that love.