

## Commentary to the 28th Sunday In Ordinary Time (C)

### FROM HEALING TO FAITH



We can run the risk of reducing the message of the today's Gospel to a lesson of good manners, to remember to say thank you to those who help us. The Samaritan leper is added at times as a model of gratitude and no more. Interpreted in this way, the scene with which the story concludes—a group of persons inexplicably discourteous and an unhappy Jesus—communicates sorrow more than joy, while in every page of the Gospel we await only joy. The theme is not gratitude.

Jesus remains surprised: a Samaritan—a heretic, a non-believer—had a theological insight which, the nine Jews, sons of his people, educated in the faith and knowledgeable of the Scriptures, did not have. Along the way, all ten were aware that Jesus was a healer. The great news was immediately announced to the spiritual guides of Israel. God has visited his people. He has sent a prophet on par with Elisha. Until here, all the ten arrived.

A new light brightened only in the mind and heart of the Samaritan: he understood that Jesus was more than a healer. In his act of salvation the leper captured the message of God. He, the heretic who did not believe in the prophets, had surprisingly intuited that God has sent him, whom the prophets announced: He opens the eyes of the blind, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead are raised to life and the lepers are made clean (Lk 7:22).

He is the first to truly grasp that God is not far from the lepers. He does not escape nor reject them. He

knew what he must say to those who institutionalized, in the name of God, the marginalization of the lepers: get over with religion that excludes, judges, condemns the impure persons! In Jesus, the Lord appeared in their midst; he touches and heals them.

The message of joy is this: the impure, the heretics, the marginalized are not only closer to God, but they get to him and to Christ first and in a more authentic way than the others.

To internalize the message, we may repeat: “Make, O Lord, that our Christian community does not marginalize the lepers but touch and heal them.”

Fernando Armellini and Alberto Rossa