

Homily for 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I don't think I shall ever forget a couple that I married many, many years ago. They were in their late sixties. The man's first wife had died many years earlier; the woman's first marriage had ended in divorce when her husband left her for another woman. Finding each other this late in life had been an unexpected gift and everyone who attended the wedding understood and shared their joy.

Tragically, after only a few months of marriage, the husband went into cardiac arrest and died. Everyone who knew them was shocked. At the funeral she was asked by friends how she was doing. She surprised everyone by quietly and firmly saying that all she could do was to give thanks – thanks that she and her late husband had had each other for even the brief time that they did.

She told everyone: “You know we never stopped thanking God that so late in our lives this could happen.” “Every evening at dinner we did the most important act of our day. We would reach our hands across the dinner table to hold each other, and then we would close our eyes, and just say, ‘Grateful. Grateful.’”

It seems to me that in life we can either count our blessings or be overwhelmed by our struggles. We can either rejoice and relish the gift

of hope for all that we have been given or we can curse the darkness and complain about the anxieties we must cope with. We can, in the words of today's Gospel, be like the Samaritan who realized the magnitude of Christ's healing power and returned to give thanks, or, we can be like the other nine lepers who simply went on their way without even a morsel of gratitude.

St. Ignatius of Loyola taught his followers to take time at the end of each day to review the day in order to discover the hand of God at work in their lives. It is a powerful form of prayer. It is also a simple and profound way to understand how much we have to be grateful for and how many times God blesses our lives each and every day.

We live life fast...probably too fast. But no matter how fast we live, if we don't take the time to be grateful one wonders if we are living life at all.