*“Your Faith Has Saved You”*

*By Pedro Méndez*

**Readings:** [2 Kgs 5:14-17](http://usccb.org/bible/2kings/5:14); [Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4](http://usccb.org/bible/psalms/98:1); [2 Tm 2:8-13;](http://usccb.org/bible/2timothy/2:8)[Lk 17:11-19](http://usccb.org/bible/luke/17:11)

I can’t imagine the happiness of the lepers healed by God in today’s first reading and in the gospel! As we heard in the first reading, God heals Naaman through the prophet Elisha; and, in the gospel, God Himself heals ten lepers in the Person of his Son Jesus Christ. One of them—a Samaritan—returns “praising God with loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him” (Lk 17:15-16a). Let us not take lightly these wonderful miracles, especially by remembering the terrible illness of leprosy and its social consequences! Leprosy is a bacterial skin disease which is still common in hot and humid climates. Untreated leprosy can produce fatal calamities, among them an attack on garments (Lv 13:47-59) and houses (Lv 14:33-53). In the Old and New Testament times, the leper was isolated from the community for a period until it was determined, by the priest, that he/she was “clean” or that the disease was not infectious. Scholars have affirmed that Jesus sent the ten lepers to the priest for examination fulfilling the Law’s requirements. Thus, being a leper, at that time, was not an opportunity to receive charitable service; but to be excluded, and, even, rejected by the community, which was afraid of being contaminated.

By reflecting on today’s first reading and the gospel, one can see that it was not new for a man of God—the prophet Elisha—to heal a person from leprosy. The newness of Elisha’s story is that Naaman is a gentile (non-Jewish), a “commander of the army of the king of Aram” (2 Kings 5:1). At Elisha’s time, it was believed that salvation was only for Israel. Thus, the healing of Naaman was seen as a promise of the salvation available for all nations. *This salvation available for all nations is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, who does not only act in the name of God; but is God Himself restoring humanity from within*. We might, rightly, wonder how Jesus fulfills this salvation if Elisha was also able to heal a leper in God’s name. *Jesus fulfills the promise of salvation for the whole world not only by healing the body of the Samaritan—an outsider who the Jews detested even more than pagans —but also by granting him salvation: “your faith has saved you” (Lk 17:19b). This is a pivotal point: Only God saves! Thus, Jesus is God! And Jesus saves the wholeness of the human person—Jesus healed the Samaritan’s body, soul, and his social relationships (he was embraced by the community again)!*

*This is the joy of the good news: God himself grants salvation to the whole world in Jesus Christ!* Now, this salvation is made concrete: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead…such as my gospel [i.e. good news]” (2 Tim 2:8), Saint Paul writes to Timothy. *Therefore, God’s limitless mercy has reached us—Jewish and non-Jewish—concretely through Jesus’s passion, death, and resurrection*.

We know that we cannot achieve this salvation by ourselves; only by accepting Jesus and allowing Him to heal the fullness of our whole selves, for us Catholics, mainly through the Sacraments and a lifetime process of discipleship. Let us approach Jesus and cry out to Him, as the lepers did: “Jesus, have mercy on us” (Lk 17:13). Hopefully we will turn to Jesus, after being healed, with grateful hearts and hear from Him: “your faith has saved you” (Lk 17:19b). Then we would be able to sing with the unsurpassable joy of the psalmist: “all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God” (Psalm 98)…including me!