

**Reflection on the Gospel-28th Sunday in Ordinary Time C
(Luke 17:11-19)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Every day we hear news of race riots, ethnic violence and discrimination somewhere in our world, often quite close to us. Even those who do not resort to violence can tend to be suspicious of those who have different origins and different ways from them. The worst atrocities are frequently perpetrated between those who have differing understandings of the same faith. There are elements of this in the present Syrian conflict, even if religion is only one component of this protracted war. We are seeing the end product of a failure to recognize the shared humanity of all people.

Today's gospel story invites us to reflect on the potential goodness of everyone. It continues last week's focus on the saving power of faith. Just four Greek words make up the most telling sentence in the story: "And he was Samaritan!" A new element has entered into the narrative: faith is not the sole preserve of the Jewish people. A despised half-Jew can have faith, faith buried deep within and actively at work like the life in the mustard seed.

Jesus is approached by ten lepers in a village in border territory. All have been excluded from participation in village life on account of their skin disease. All beg for inclusion, expressed in terms of mercy (*eleos*). All follow the prescription of the Law of Moses to show themselves to the priests (Leviticus 13-14). All are declared "clean". Only one turns back, praises God in the market place, falls at Jesus' feet and thanks him. Readers do not know to this point whether the village and its inhabitants are Galilean or Samaritan. They only know that the village is situated in the region between Galilee and Samaria. Now the shocking truth is revealed: one is a Samaritan, doubly marginalised as a "foreigner" or "stranger" and it is this one alone that gives thanks to Jesus and honour to God. This one alone receives the now familiar affirmation: "your faith has saved you". Jesus tells the Samaritan to rise up and continue on his way, on his journey of faith. The other nine are healed, presumably because they too have some limited faith. They have nonetheless forgotten the source of their healing and abandoned the journey to life.

One measure of our faith is our capacity to acknowledge and to celebrate the source of our well-being when life is good and we have no felt need for healing. Another is our capacity to say a simple word of thanks to all those who mediate to us the goodness of a compassionate and merciful God, whatever our circumstances. As this Jubilee Year of Mercy nears its end, we might pause to give thanks for everyone and everything that mediates God's mercy to us and to our troubled planet.