Author Aaron Zerah tells a story. It begins, “A poor man lived with his wife and six children in a very small one-room house. They were always getting in each other's way and there was so little space they could hardly breathe! Finally the man could stand it no more. He talked to his wife and asked her what to do. "Go see the rabbi," she told him, and after arguing a while, he went. The rabbi greeted him and said, "I see something is troubling you. Whatever it is, you can tell me."

And so the poor man told the rabbi how miserable things were at home with him, his wife, and the six children all eating and living and sleeping in one room. The poor man told the rabbi, "We're even starting to yell and fight with each other. Life couldn't be worse."

The rabbi thought very deeply about the poor man's problem. Then he said, "Do exactly as I tell you and things will get better. Do you promise?"

"I promise," the poor man said.

The rabbi then asked the poor man a strange question. "Do you own any animals?"

"Yes," he said. "I have one cow, one goat, and some chickens."

"Good," the rabbi said. "When you get home, take all the animals into your house to live with you."

The poor man was astonished to hear this advice from the rabbi, but he had promised to do exactly what the rabbi said. So he went home and took all the farm animals into the tiny one-room house.

The next day the poor man ran back to see the rabbi. "What have you done to me, Rabbi?" he cried. "It's awful. I did what you told me and the animals are all over the house! Rabbi, help me!"

The rabbi listened and said calmly, "Now go home and take the chickens back outside."

The poor man did as the rabbi said, but hurried back again the next day. "The chickens are gone, but Rabbi, the goat!" he moaned. "The goat is smashing up all the furniture and eating everything in sight!"

The good rabbi said, "Go home and remove the goat and may God bless you."
So the poor man went home and took the goat outside. But he ran back again to see the 
rabbi, crying and wailing. "What a nightmare you have brought to my house, Rabbi! With the 
cow it's like living in a stable! Can human beings live with an animal like this?"

The rabbi said sweetly, "My friend, you are right. May God bless you. Go home now and 
take the cow out of your house." And the poor man went quickly home and took the cow out of 
the house.

The next day he came running back to the rabbi again. "O Rabbi," he said with a big 
smile on his face, "we have such a good life now. The animals are all out of the house. The house 
is so quiet and we've got room to spare! What a joy!" And they lived happily ever after.

Now, there are two possible morals to this story. First, instead of going to a Rabbi for 
advice, try going to a Catholic priest. Just Sayin’. Second, and more to the point, be a person of 
profound gratitude. Be a person of profound gratitude. And, for heaven’s sake, don’t wait until 
your blessings are taken away before you are grateful for the blessings in your life. We take so 
much for granted, don’t we?

And so, in our Gospel reading, ten lepers were healed by Christ, and only one came back 
to give thanks to God. So typical of human beings, spending every prayer to God asking for this, 
that and the other thing, never stopping for a moment to say thank you, whether that thank you is 
to God directly or to God indirectly by way of offering the simple courtesy of thanking the 
people in our lives more often. The Gospel challenges us to consider at the heart of being a 
Christian is being a person of gratitude. And when we don’t learn this lesson, I believe God 
sometimes has a playful way of helping us to learn gratitude much like our rabbi in the story I 
just shared with you.

How central is the spirituality of gratitude in our faith tradition? Well, did you know that 
the word Eucharist literally means “thanksgiving”? A theological question could be then, is the 
body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ fully present in the Holy Eucharist our thanksgiving to 
God or God’s thanksgiving for us? Going by the definition of “covenant” the answer is both.

We offer the Father thanksgiving when we offer his Son in the most holy Sacrifice of the 
Mass. The night before Jesus died, however, Jesus gave us thanks and praise prior to instituting 
His Holy Eucharist. Therefore, it is safe to say that Eucharist truly underscores the importance of 
gratitude in the Spirit life.
Jesus is inviting us this Sunday to live lives that are accentuated by the virtue of thankfulness. Ingratitude is the leprosy of the soul. Ingratitude, in fact, can disfigure us spiritually. Ingratitude can even disfigure us physically as undue anxieties and worries begin to take their toll. Ingratitude can disfigure our relationships as well. In my experience, when communication breaks down in families it is usually because there has been a breakdown in gratitude…and now relationships are disfigured. If our relationships are becoming disfigured from the leprosy of thanklessness, the remedy is gratitude. The remedy is gratitude.

And so, we can ask ourselves, who are the people in our lives this week that we need to say thank you to? At home, at work, in the community? Who do we need to offer thanks to? Every day we must not forget to remember to thank somebody, mom, dad, husband or wife, sister, brother, coworker, classmate, neighbor…every day we can find somebody to thank. From farmers in the field, to those who bring produce to the markets, to our men and women in uniform, military, police, firefighters, to doctors, to school teachers, even political leaders (O boy, they sure could use our prayers), the list goes on and on!

I remember years ago a time when I was really working hard on being more grateful in life and I was pulled over for speeding. The police officer came to my window and I decided to thank him for the ticket and for serving our community, he looked at me as if I had two heads! I figured he probably has a very hard job serving the community and so I should be thankful. I savored the expression on his face when I thanked him.

My friends, it isn’t hard. Gratitude isn’t hard….and yet, in our day to day routines, how easy it is to forget the most important things in life, like gratitude. And so, Gospel readings like the one we have today come around as good reminders. Or as medieval theologian Meister Eckhart once provocatively suggested, “If you only said one prayer in your entire life, thank you would be sufficient.”