

'THANKSGIVING' – HOMILY - 9 OCTOBER 2016

Spread out here are 168 book markers.

Certainly quite a few.

Picking up one and gazing at it compared to the 167, the one seems so tiny.

Do you find that as human beings, we are good at making excuses?

We might make excuses, for example,

If we don't understand something,

Or if we are lazy,

Or we can't be bothered,

Or we are embarrassed,

Or perhaps it is not a priority,

Or we are not interested,

Or we have no intention of doing something, yet don't want to hurt someone's feelings.

There are 168 hours in a week, and each hour has 60 minutes.

One hour out of 168 seems so small.

Yet we are invited to give one hour a week to God as a community,

To thank God and express our gratitude to God.

One out of 168 hours.

When we go to Mass, we go to celebrate Eucharist – thanksgiving.

We can personally thank God throughout each day for many things.

But in Eucharist we come together in Jesus.

Eucharist comes from the Greek word *'eucharistia'* (Gk. [εὐχαριστία](#)) for thanksgiving.

From the early Church we learn that we celebrate a special time as community

To praise God, to give thanks to God.

We learn from the Gospels about Eucharist.

We learn from the Acts of the Apostles. We learn from the New Testament Letters.

We expect God to watch over us 168 hours a week.

We expect God to have time for us, our families, our neighbours, our work, our problems, our injuries, our concerns and our future.

We expect God to watch over us - even on our holidays.

Sunday Eucharist is when we come together in one of those 168 hours a week

To express our common gratitude.

Of course in some Eastern traditions, Eucharist might be for longer.

In some Latin communities Eucharist is celebrated for much longer.

In rural parishes in Australia, people might stay afterwards

And catch up on the local news and how people are faring.

In city parishes we stay for a cuppa after a particular Mass and share.

In today's Gospel passage we have 10 people with leprosy who are cured by Jesus.

Ten people who will no longer be contagious and outcasts.

Ten people who will be able to sit around the table with family and enjoy a meal together.

To laugh together. To dance together. To work together in the fields.

Ten people who now have a future, because Jesus cured them.

Yet only one returns to give thanks.
In Eucharist we return to give thanks.

At Mass, we pray about the week ahead,
We place before God the present,
And we return to give thanks as God watched over us the past week.

Why this particular form of asking and of giving thanks?
Because God gifts us with the Word of God (the Bible Readings in the 1st part of the Mass)
And because Jesus gifts us with the Last Supper (2nd part of the Mass).
We receive God's Word. By listening. By living.
We receive the Real Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion.
We humbly give thanks to God for so much.

We pray in words, in listening, in song, in silence,
In receiving, in gesture, in participating in the sacredness of Eucharist.
This week we take time to remember those devastated by Hurricane Matthew in the Caribbean.
Time to join with the children of Syria who pray for adults to work for peace.
Time to pray for our family, friends, workmates and others.
Time to pray for anyone we know who is sick, or troubled, or struggling.

This week we take time to remember how God has supported us,
Listened to us,
Challenged us in our growth in love,
Helped us when we stumbled,
Rejoiced with us,
Watched over us when we slept,
Touched us through the lives of others,
Called to us in our moments of silence,
And stayed with us as we gazed at beauty.

The weekly Eucharist is summit and source of our shared spiritual life.
Looking back over the week, looking ahead to the week before us, and dwelling in the present.

And a question to ponder.
How has God healed me in the past week?
Like the Samaritan in today's Gospel, we return to express our gratitude.
Jesus gave back to the Samaritan the sense of belonging.

And we give thanks to God.

Let us turn to each other and give thanks for each other.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – 'Thanksgiving' – 9 October 2016]
[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/100916.cfm>]