

Another translation of this Gospel reads “ten persons with leprosy” instead of “ten lepers” – perhaps to prevent the look of disappointment in the eyes of a first-grader when this was the Gospel for a school Mass, and he realized that Jesus healed ten lepers, not ten leopards, with a “d.” His mental image of those ten large spotted cats sitting patiently in front of Jesus was certainly more picturesque. But if God performs a miracle, what might it look like? In today’s world of loud voices and large gestures, things that are notorious and controversial get people’s attention. But ***that is not the way God works.*** Subtle; gradual; quiet; persistent; unhurried. Most often, this is the path God chooses in our lives – to invite, to guide, to be there with us through light and darkness, days and nights, good times and bad ... just as He guided the Hebrews in their long journey in the desert, or as He gives so many of you patience and strength in the steady work of building homes filled with love and mercy. Sometimes we understandably wish God would do something dramatic, overwhelming, unmistakable. ***But slow and patient growth in faith proves to be the most reliable, and the steady support of grace is no less the work of God.***

Indeed, Naaman’s cure reminds us that ***God uses ordinary means to work extraordinary changes.*** A little farther back in the story, the prophet Elisha had told Naaman he could be cured of his leprosy by washing in the Jordan. Naaman was a general in the army, used to giving orders, not taking them. Elisha’s advice seemed to be simply a way of mocking him. He expected the prophet to do some remarkable deed with dramatic gestures and mysterious words. To be told instead to take a bath seemed like an insult, not the means for a miracle. But his servants persuaded him that this apparently ordinary thing was perhaps more extraordinary than anything he could have imagined ... and so he washed and was cleansed. What seemed like a trivial gesture, even a refusal to help by the prophet, was in fact the pivotal step.

When Jesus told the ten lepers, “Go show yourselves to the priests,” it would have seemed to them like a refusal as well. In what was an early public health measure, those afflicted with skin disease were

supposed to present themselves to the Levites, who would diagnose them and decide if it was a minor and passing illness that was not contagious, or if they had to go into quarantine and stay away from the rest. So Jesus's words sounded something like: "Don't bother me, go somewhere else." But here, something new happened – they were able to show themselves to the Levites, not as those who were sick, but as those who were cured. Jesus sends them, *not because He refuses to help, but so that they could return to their families and ordinary life in their community.*

Like the Samaritan, *we return here week by week precisely to give thanks for the fact that God has intervened to heal our lives in Christ, and remains constantly at work.* His love, revealed in its depths on the Cross, has changed the course of all things – sin can give way to mercy, evil is overcome by love, and death is swallowed up in life. // // When we struggle; when the routines of our chores and responsibilities seem empty and stifling; when our communities suffer violence, injustice, and division, when those we love suffer – it is understandable that we might wish God would do something dramatic, exciting, unmistakable. But God still usually chooses the quiet path for us ... to invite, to guide, to be with us through light and darkness, days and nights, good times and bad. Here, God is directly at work when bread and wine become the Savior's Body and Blood, a real foreshadowing of the final reunion of all things brought back into God. As we consume Him, we become part of His life and his mission to strive to bring healing in our own relationships and encounters with others God puts in our lives. Take a look around at what you see here ... because every time we gather with Christ in the Eucharist, a miracle happens; and THIS is what it looks like.