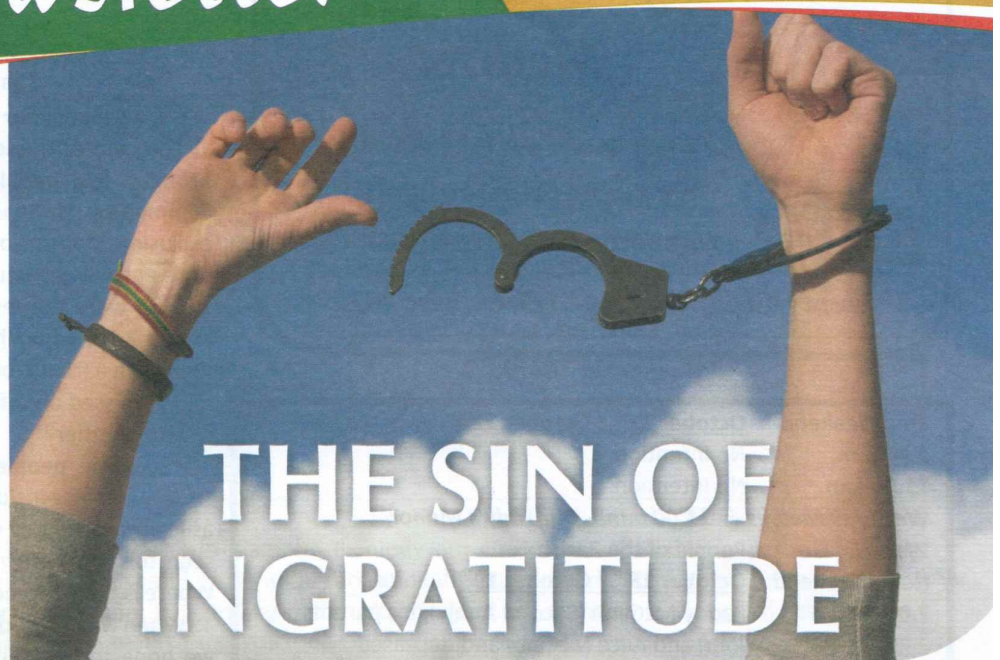


GratITUDE seems to be in short supply in our world, which is more marked by ingratitude and at times a peculiar sense of entitlement: the feeling that you are owed something. I'm not sure where it comes from. Perhaps it's from an aspiration to self-sufficiency, combined with a sheer inability to acknowledge that we DO rely on each other.

The very proud Naaman was very independent and in high office. He was humbled by leprosy but seemed to be held in high regard by his Jewish slave girl who persuaded him to do as he was told — go bathe in the river Jordan. Why was Naaman — and why are we in turn — so reluctant to do a simple thing?

We seem to labour under an illusion of being completely independent, which does the damage. People fear dependence to such a degree that anything — or anyone — that reminds us of when we were reliant on another is to be avoided. The Gospel experience of a mostly ungrateful group of cured lepers lives on today. The human aspect of Jesus is most consoling — that he noted only one returned to say thanks.

It may be hard to grasp the world of leprosy and the social isolation that Jesus saved the ten lepers from. Anyone with a little capacity for reflection will recall how we kept



people in Irish society on the edge of life: the 'stigma' of TB, psychiatric illness, pregnancy outside marriage, HIV and many others things. We have an extraordinary capacity for harshness and lack of forgiveness.

Ten cured in the Gospel, but what of seventeen people saved by an Edward Spenser back in 1860. He was a student for ministry and a strong swimmer who saved that many from drowning in one incident. The effort impaired his health permanently, so much so that he could not follow his chosen calling: to be a minister. He too was disappointed that nobody said thanks. He was a world away from a fellow American who chided another world leader for not being grateful for military aid received. Spenser was haunted by those he could not save from drowning. His

brother related how he would fix his eyes upon him and ask '... tell me the truth, did I fail to do my best?'

Perhaps in an ungrateful world, that is the only question we need to answer in the end. One hymn, inspired by the Edward Spenser story, has these words:

How many are the lost that I
have lifted? How many are the
chained I've helped to free?

I wonder, have I done my best for
Jesus, When He has done his best for
me?

— Tom Cox

Lord Jesus Christ, ... Amen.
The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And with your spirit.

As the priest breaks the consecrated Host the following is sung or said:

Lamb of God, you take away the sins ...

Showing the Host to the people, the priest says:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

Communion Antiphon (Cf. Ps 33:11)
**The rich suffer want and go hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no
blessing.**

Prayer after Communion

We entreat your majesty most humbly, O Lord,
that, as you feed us with the nourishment
which comes from the most holy Body
and Blood of your Son,
so you may make us sharers of his
divine nature.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Reflection

In which ways did you glorify God
and thank him?

Lesson

All people need to do is to imitate
the healed Samaritan leper by
responding in faith and gratitude
to God's gift.

Prayer

Lord, give us faith to respond to
your gift that we might glorify and
praise you, your Son, and the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.