

Gary 12 Oct

I believe that today's gospel contains a very important message!

Gratitude seems to be the focus. The word "gratitude" jolts us out of the self-centredness that can dominate us if we allow our lives to focus only on ourselves and our lives and how we can make our lives better.

Life may focus on making more money and maybe having a little extra for something fun to do as well. Life should not be all work and no play! But this attitude can lead to misery if we have to end up using our extra money on the unexpected like medical bills, for an example. Of course we would prefer to spend this money on a trip overseas or a new car or a meal out on a regular basis. It is easy to fall into the trap of feeling sorry for ourselves if we are too focused on ourselves. Depression is far too common in the lives of many. But depression can begin as a self-imposed misery even when it is caused by things outside of our control.

In today's reading from Jeremiah we hear that the exiles in Babylon are encouraged to live lives of optimism but also to look to the needs of others. *Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters, multiply there, and do not decrease.* In other words live life to the full! But it doesn't end there: *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find welfare.* In other words as we heard we should live life to the full but also look to the needs of others!

Life also should be built around looking to the future with hope but also reflecting on so many aspects of the past that have brought us great joy. In our home there are so many reminders of happy times to be found in photos, in special knick-knacks and gifts received

over the years which remind us of special events, places and people.

Like us, Jesus was on a journey too! He met ten lepers who begged him to cure them. It is difficult to imagine the extent of their pleading or to share in their torment unless we have travelled that path ourselves. Jesus must have felt their desperation and he had pity on them and cured them. It is interesting, and somewhat hard to believe, that only one felt it in his heart to give thanks. Jesus had given all ten of them an opportunity for a whole new life, a new start, but only one leper returned to thank Jesus. They loved the gift but overlooked the giver.

In today's gospel, in the story of the ten lepers and also in our own lives we often restrict second chances to escaping from close calls with death or being cured of chronic illness. Although these situations are exceptional opportunities for which we should be grateful, we do not have to wait for close calls with death or miraculous cures. There is absolutely nothing stopping us from acting immediately on the twin realizations that time is limited and the time is now. To be given a second chance is a great gift and many vow to take it seriously. This second lease on life is going to lead to not repeating the mistakes of their first lease on life, to focus on what is truly important. But to the cynical onlooker the prediction is that these resolutions will be short-lived. The cured will return to the mindless lives they previously lived. The "more time" they have been granted is simply that – "more time".

They may have been lucky but it has not changed their lives in any real way.

Maybe it is time to look at our lives and reflect on what it means to live lives to the full and look to the future with hope and optimism in our hearts!

So WHAT about us? Are there people in our past who made a huge difference in our lives?

What about the obvious ones like parents, grand-parents, teachers, one of many friends or

neighbours amongst a long list that played such an important part. Maybe someone who did a small random act of kindness that made a huge difference in our lives?

Have we thanked them and told them what a difference they have made to our lives?

It is important to acknowledge in some way the importance of a small act of kindness, the right word at the right time, the simple act of a smile or being there as a shoulder to cry on as well as to be there as a companion when we are going through hard times.

Speaking personally having travelled down the path of dying and being brought back to life I will always be grateful for my family, especially my wife, my friends, many of whom are seated in front of me today, the fabulous doctors, paramedics and nurses and being fortunate to live in this city, in this state, and in this country. I am so very grateful that I have been so richly blessed. I believe we should often set aside a few moments to examine where our lives are at and make each day count from that day onwards.