

## Reflection - Saint Martin of Tours - 11 November 2020

**T**he Samaritan leper returns to Jesus, giving thanks to God in a loud voice. Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well - has healed him - has saved him. He is not just cured of a disease, not just cleansed, but there is something more for him. He is made whole, saved, because of his faith. This is not something that can be said of the other lepers. Yes, they were surely cured of leprosy, but were they in fact saved, were they truly healed? We shall not know, because the record is silent.

**T**his Samaritan, this hated foreigner, is told that he is healed fully. In some ways, it is amusing, because having heard what Jesus told them to do, he must have realised that he was not in a position to follow Jesus' instruction. He was a Samaritan. He couldn't very well show himself to the Jewish priests. Perhaps in not being able to carry out that instruction according to the law, he discovers just how deep God's mercy is - that it reaches beyond the confines of the Mosaic law to those on the outside of the People of Israel. Perhaps that is why he turns and gives thanks. He is in a position to appreciate just how significant this healing is.

**J**esus at Nazareth, had referred to the curing of Naaman the Syrian, and had provoked the people so much that they wanted to throw him off a cliff. Here he is healing a different type of foreigner, but still this point must not have been lost, when he scolds the absent lepers. Hackles must have been raised, maybe even for the disciples themselves. It is radical stuff. A foreigner with faith, and not the Jews? The same is the case with the Syro-Phœnician woman who's faith Jesus rewards by curing her daughter, and also the healing of the Roman Centurion's slave. Jesus is showing how God is truly the God of the Nations.

**S**aint Martin of Tours' parents were pagans, and Martin was forced by his father to be a soldier. Subsequently, Martin was stationed in Pavia, Italy, as a teenager. Somehow, he discovered and was drawn to the Catholic Faith there, and became a catechumen, and, as they say, the rest is history. God calls us at all sorts of unexpected times, and sometimes there doesn't seem to be any prior lead up to it. God can break through any barrier or difficulty, just as he did with the healing of the Samaritan. God offered grace and mercy and, like the Samaritan leper, Martin responded in faith, loudly proclaiming the praises of God, and this eventually led him to heaven. God showers grace and mercy on us, we must respond joyfully and thankfully to it so that we can, like Saint Martin, win heaven.