

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Saint Francis de Sales offers an image that resonates deeply with us as adult children of dysfunctional homes:

"So long as fruits are undamaged they may be preserved, some in straw, some in sand, and some in their own leaves; but when they are once bruised, it is almost impossible to keep them but with honey and sugar in conserves: in like manner purity which has never been wounded or violated can be kept in many ways, but when it has once been impaired, nothing can conserve it but an excellent devotion, which, as I have often said, is the true spiritual honey and sugar" (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter 12).

Our "bruising" came early in life—through neglect, inconsistency, or broken relationships. We developed coping strategies to survive, but these often left us anxious, ashamed, and disconnected. Like bruised fruit, we cannot preserve ourselves by effort alone. Only God's devotion—the honey of His grace—can bring real healing.

Recovery literature describes this same helplessness: at some point, our best efforts are "of absolutely no avail" (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 24). We need God's help to move beyond survival into freedom.

This Sunday's first reading mirrors our need for surrender (2 Kings 5:14–15):

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy. Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

Like Naaman, we resist at first, convinced we can manage on our own. But healing comes when we plunge into God's mercy. Each Step into honesty, surrender, and forgiveness immerses us in His grace and restores our childlike identity.

Some of us recognize our powerlessness quickly. Others wander for years, weighed down by fear and dysfunction, before realizing we need God's care. In every case, healing comes through surrender.

In this Sunday's Gospel, ten lepers are healed, but only one returns with gratitude (Luke 17:11-19):

One of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.

He was a Samaritan.

Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not?"

Where are the other nine?

Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"

Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Our recovery deepens when we live with gratitude. We may never erase the wounds of our past, but faith and thanksgiving transform them into sources of wisdom and compassion. Gratitude preserves the healing God gives us and keeps us from slipping back into old family roles. When we share our story honestly and return often to God with thanks, we find freedom not only for ourselves but also for those we encourage along the way.

Reflection Questions

- How do you relate to the image of "bruised fruit" as someone who grew up in a dysfunctional home?
- What does Naaman's act of plunging into the Jordan teach you about surrendering control?
- How does practicing gratitude help you remain faithful in your recovery and healing journey?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19