

28th Sunday in Ordinary time – Transfer Rectorate – October 8th 2022

Ben Frie SJ

We heard talk of healing, first by the God of Israel, then by Jesus Himself. In both cases faith played a role: it did not come naturally, but faith had to be shown first. Even the one being healed had to become convinced of the power of God.

The priests also play a role in this: they have to determine the healing, only then may the people who were infected mingle among the others again without infecting others.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that it is foreigners who get involved with the God of Israel. A Syrian, a Samaritan. Jesus' fellow believers are not so godly, no, it is the foreigners who come to know Him and believe in Him. A test for established religion.

Next, gratitude is a theme. Naaman wants to continue to honor the God of Israel with sacrifices, the Samaritan comes to give thanks. They are told: your faith is your salvation. At least Israel has a God who works, who you can believe in with good continuity, who makes you better.

On this weekend I may hand over responsibility for the rectorate to my fellow jesuit and colleague Jan Stuyt. We have known each other for years and I know that this task is rightly entrusted to him. He is a strong organizer, but above all: he has great skill in dealing with people. The Krijtberg is his own, down to the last detail.

When I look back for a moment at the five years that I was allowed to be rector here, a series of keywords come to mind: major maintenance, sacristy attic, Xavier Choir, Covid, streaming, Living Stones, volunteers, Gerwin Roffel, interns, faith course, expats, inner city, everything through the rector, monument, summer retreat, declining income, not really a diaconate, not really a community, visiting the sick and burying the dead, administration, banks, Chamber of Commerce, ministering sacraments, an old and difficult structure. In the synodal process we participated in the margins. Another key word: fellow jesuits.

We heard talk of healing. People do say that foreigners will save the Church in the West.

There are cultures, think of Asia, think of Africa, where Christianity can still do its work unspoiled. There are Christians coming here who had to stand up for their faith. The motivation to make something of this church is great in them. And there are those who come to faith here again and again, who sense the power of our faith here and join us. Here children and adults are baptized, here people are married.

We have the good fortune of our location: the inner city where many are looking for connection, for inspiration. Many passersby here are surprised by what this building evokes: awe, wonder, the beauty of art. Again the foreigners who expect healing here, healing for their tested lives. But also many who have long been familiar with this church here and have experienced various rectors, changes in ways of doing things, taking the sure thing in this Krijtberg. We are still here, in this reasonably well attended church.

Naaman asks for a load of earth from Israel's soil, because in his opinion you can only worship a god on his own soil. We later came to understand that all land belongs to God and worship does not require a clod of earth from the garden of the Krijtberg. But whatever it is, here one can meet God, and support one another in that communion with God. God cannot deny himself and remains faithful to his creation, to his people, to his world as much as it too is in travail.

We must therefore be faithful to one another. Christianity has a future only if we continue it, as fragile as it is in our days. If it has healing power for the world, we will have to bear witness to it and make that healing power perceptible. Here is a God who lives, who gives his

life through Him in whom we began to recognize the Messiah. Anyone who is aware of that must be a grateful person for this place. A rector can be replaced, God cannot.