

When we're upset with someone- and it could be one of the persons we're closest to in this world or it could be someone we don't know from Adam- when we're upset with them we don't just let our negative emotions take control of the situation and make us who we're really not, we allow ourselves to conveniently forget that this person we are talking down to is a human being, and not just something that exists solely to make us crazy.

So when I am making a phone call to correct some mistake on my credit card account or calling EZ Pass to make a simple change on the account- which should be the easiest thing to do in the world but ends up being more complicated than getting a man to the moon- or whatever it is we're trying to correct within the wonderful world of technology, and the person on the other end of the line is telling me to do something on my computer screen that is not possible and they are insisting that it is possible and I say no it isn't and they say yes it is, and I want to reach down the line and make my displeasure known, what I'm really doing is imposing myself on this poor guy or this poor lady who has to listen to customers' problems and frustrations all day, and is getting paid hardly anything for the privilege.

That person on the other end of the line is a child of God just like each one of us is, and it's just not fair and it's just not right that we sometimes treat them like that. And even if it is someone we know well that we are having a serious disagreement with and we only see them through the lens of anger and disappointment, that's just as bad. We are so much better than that.

In the Gospel story we just heard, there's a very important detail that has nothing to do with gratitude- gratitude being the obvious take-home from the story and which is why it is used at the Mass for the Thanksgiving holiday every year- but which is just as important to our lives of faith. And that is because it's not just about our relationship with God- it's about our

relationship with the people that we share this world with. It's about helping us deal with persons who we have a problem with and who so easily disturb our peace of mind and heart, and why allow that to happen? I don't know about you, but I can use all the peace of mind and heart I can get.

Remember that at that time and place the Jews and the Samaritans practically hated each other- even though they were very close ethnically and culturally, there was a long-standing rivalry that pitted them against one another, even long after the original conflict occurred and by rights both sides should have gotten over it.

These lepers in the Gospel story were a mixed group of Jews and Samaritans, united in their common suffering and so praying together and calling upon Jesus together- their learned prejudices and hates exposed for the nonsense and the irrational behaviors and attitudes that they were and instead reaching out to the Lord in solidarity with one another.

We just need to remember that every person on the face of this earth is just as valuable and just as loved by God as each one of us is, and that every person on the fact of the earth is suffering just as much as each one of us is. And when we begin to do that, we start to see our brother or sister who we have a problem with as a someone who is just as troubled by life as we are, and then we can deal with them with empathy and compassion, and not impatience and anger.

Does that mean that the next time I call EZ Pass and they are getting on my last nerve that I will control my anger and be the epitome of patience and kindness to the person on the other end of the line? I wouldn't swear to it, but I will try my best to do so. Or when someone cuts me off when I am driving that I won't get upset and not say a few choice words to that

person? Again, I'll try my best and I'll remember that the person who cut me off is no better and no worse than I am, and I will say "God bless them" and move on.

And I will remember that I am far from perfect myself and that I have done things just as bad as that and even worse, and I will ask the Lord's forgiveness and He will forgive me. And thanks be to God for that.