

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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There was a lawyer who, to disconcert Jesus, stood up and said to him, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What do you read there?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' 'You have answered right,' said Jesus 'do this and life is yours.'

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said "and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the brigands' hands?' 'The one who took pity on him' he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

(Luke 10:25-37)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The priest and the Levite in this parable were religious professionals. They were on their way to perform duties in the temple. If they had touched the wounded man, they may have come into contact with blood and therefore become ritually unclean and unable to perform their duties. Their obsession with religious regulations blinded them to an even more fundamental commandment to love their neighbour.
- The denarius was a Roman silver coin equivalent to a day's pay. The action of the Samaritan is extravagantly generous!
- The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was the normal route taken by anyone travelling to the holy city and the temple. Jericho was the usual crossing point of the River Jordan.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The parables that Jesus tells were always designed to shock those listening. To our modern ears, the shock lies in the fact that the priest and Levite simply walked past the wounded man, but this would not have been a shock to those of Jesus' time. These men had sacred duties to perform in the temple. If the man was dead or even bleeding and they came into contact with him, they would not have been able to perform their obligations to God! The real shock to those listening in Jesus' day lies in the response of the Samaritan. Between Jews and Samaritans, there was enmity and suspicion that went back centuries. Samaritans do not behave like that! To be so moved by compassion for the wounded man that he bathes and dresses the wounds and pays for his further care would seem outrageous to the Jews. This practical application of 'love of neighbour' is taken a step further when Jesus commands that the lawyer act in the same way as the Samaritan. This too would have been a shock!

- What are some of the 'stereotyped' images we have of certain groups or peoples today?
- Explore some of the barriers that exist in our own society.
- How are we called to break down those barriers and build bridges instead?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Ask yourself that fundamental question: what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- Who is your neighbor? Identify those who suffer today.
- Go and do the same yourself: what does this mean in our world?
- Share an experience you may have had of being helped or attended to by someone you least expected. Perhaps you were assisted by a perfect stranger. Share your stories. Alternatively, share an experience of when you were moved by compassion and responded positively.
- Respond with generosity to someone in need this week. Give a donation to an agency that works with the poor or needy. Better still, become involved in that work.
- A verse from today's psalm is a suitable prayer this week:

*This is my prayer to you, my prayer for your favour.
In your great love answer me, O God,
with your help that never fails:
Lord, answer, for your love is kind;
in your compassion, turn towards me.*

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God’s word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The story of St Francis and his life-changing encounter with the leper is just one of the Church’s treasury of stories of unselfish love of neighbour. Another is the story of Damien of Molokai, or St Martin and the beggar.

- Tell some of these stories of selfless giving.
• Are there people in your parish who work tirelessly for the disadvantaged? Arrange for them to share their stories.

One of the great contributions that Pope John Paul II made during his papacy was his constant call to engage in interreligious dialogue in order to break down barriers and build bridges between all people of the human family. Pope Francis shares this commitment to interreligious dialogue, encouraging us to pray that ‘sincere dialogue among men and women of different faiths may produce the fruits of peace and justice’ (video prayer message, 8 January 2016). What does this mean? The response to recent events in Christchurch may give some insight into what can be achieved through mutual respect and dialogue.

- Explore some of the initiatives being taken by the Church in this area—for example, the ecumenical World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, held last year at Assisi.
• You could gather information from the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious Dialogue on what initiatives are being taken locally to build relations with other people of faith.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

There is a timelessness in this parable. The pathos of the image of the injured man calls us all to come to the aid of wounded humanity. We are asked to respond with compassion and generosity to those in need. We are called to grow in awareness of the real demand of faith in a God of Life rather than rest in simple adherence to ritual obligation.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- In what ways is your community engaged in breaking down barriers between people and faiths. Are there ways in which catechumens can become involved?
• This might be an appropriate time for an anointing of the catechumens given in the RCIA at \$101. Use a phial of oil as a focus. Talk about how the Samaritan used oil for healing. Adapt the prayer to reflect today’s gospel. Pray for each other and pray for all those who care for the needy. You could sing ‘The Servant Song’ (GA 487).

NOTES

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.