

15th Sunday of the Year

When preparing for this homily I went onto the internet and googled The Samaritans and the strap line is “Samaritans work to make sure there is always someone there for anyone who needs someone.” When we think about that statement it is extremely broad because no-one is excluded – anyone who needs someone.

Today we have just listened to one of the best known of Jesus’ parables unique to the gospel of Luke, The context is a hostile question put by a lawyer to test Jesus, ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus answers the question by referring to the Law, and asking the Lawyer what he reads there, so the lawyer, in answer to Jesus gives the twofold command to love God and to love neighbour. ‘You have answered right,’ says Jesus, do this and life is yours.’ This could, perhaps should, have been the end of the conversation but we are told, the man anxious to justify himself asks, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ As a lawyer he would have expected a definition, but what he got was a story, and a story that would have rocked him, and many of his contemporaries to the core because of the history between the Samaritans and the Jews over centuries.

There are four people in the story, A priest, a man of deep religious convictions who served in the Temple. A Levite, also a religious person, a Samaritan, regarded by devout Jews as an outsider and someone to be avoided, and an unknown man who was beaten up and left for dead. The story as it unfolds invites us to reflect on who did what and why. The priest and the Levite could put forward legal, ritual purity explanations why they passed by on the other side. In doing so they were saying that fulfilling their religious duties was more important than helping a person in need. The Samaritan could have said, ‘it’s none of my business,’ and walked by on the other side, but he didn’t, he was the one to show compassion, to give first aid, and even more. The word for compassion is the same one used when Jesus felt compassion for the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Compassion is much more than pity, much more than feeling sorry, compassion moves to action.

And so we come to Jesus’ final question to the lawyer, ‘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’, ‘Go, and do the same yourself!’

There are no borders or boundaries where compassion and mercy are concerned. (we remember the strap line of the Samaritans - “Samaritans works to make sure there is always someone there for anyone who needs someone.” Jesus says quite plainly, where we see need, there is a neighbour. The quality of the love we have for our neighbour demonstrates the love we have for God, the two are inextricably mixed. How can we say we love the God we cannot see when we do not love the neighbour we can see. Parables are meant to shock, to provoke, to push boundaries and this one certainly does that. Jesus would have antagonised a great many people with this story and it makes us ask for the grace to imitate the Samaritan, even when this means leaving other important things aside, which the priest and the Levite failed to do and be moved to be that someone who is there for someone in need, no matter who they are.

Bidding Prayers for the 15th Sunday of the Year

Celebrant:

This is my prayer to you, my prayer for your favour, in your compassion turn towards me. With these words of the psalm in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always encourage us all to show compassion to those in need, no matter the cost to ourselves.

Lord in your mercy

For Political leaders and those who exert huge influence over the lives of others – that they will do all they can to bring about peace in our world and to uphold the human rights of all people.

Lord in your mercy

For The Samaritans who work to make sure there is always someone there for anyone who needs someone – that their work will give hope to those who are at the end of their tether.

Lord in your mercy

For those suffering in body, mind or spirit – that they will experience Christ's healing presence and the love and support of family and friends.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid 19 pandemic, and May Huston, Peggy Woodcock, Margaret Gowdrige, Jack Rodgers, Peter Halliwell, Ann Taylor and Winifred O'Gara whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, your Son pushed many boundaries in reaching out to those in need, enable us to be 'Good Samaritans' by showing true compassion to our neighbours wherever they are. We ask this through Christ our Lord.