

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 10 July 2022

Scriptures: Deut. 30:10-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people that they must follow the voice of God by keeping the commandments that are written in their hearts. In the second reading St. Paul proclaims that Jesus Christ is the image of the unseen God through whom all was created and in whom all things are reconciled to God. The Gospel is the very familiar story of the Good Samaritan.

There is a point to the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan. But before we engage in the exegesis of it, we can first look briefly at another story: the feeding of the 5,000. The narration says there were 5,000 men. Well, this was not a meeting of the Native Israelites of the Golden West. It was most likely an ordinary day, maybe Sunday. Jesus was very famous by this time, and everyone wanted to see him including women and children. In fact, it was a young boy who the apostle Philip brought forward because he had two fish and some bread rolls.

But stop there. What kind of rolls? The story specifically tells us they were barley rolls. Is that important? Yes, it is very important. The only people who ate barley rolls were the very poorest people who could not afford to buy any grain except barley. Once again, we have a parable where Jesus' attention is focused on the poor.

Now to today's very famous parable, the Good Samaritan. It is truly one of the most challenging stories in the Gospels. We all know the story, but perhaps not all of it. The phrase "good Samaritan" is a well established part of the English language.

As to the story, Jesus uses the first part to highly criticize the religious leaders as the hypocrites they truly were. He blasts them for their lack of mercy and compassion, for ignoring those in need by crossing the road to the dark side. Finally, the person from Samaria arrives. Being from Samaria is very significant. The people of Judea and Galilee had no respect for Samaritans. They treated them condescendingly. Worse even than the L.A.—San Francisco rivalry.

But the words of Jesus not only hit hard against the religious leaders, but they became an instant revelation of what Jesus was about and who he was. His message was very clear.

In the parable, Jesus challenges us to examine our own hearts, and to see how we are living according to the example of Jesus himself.

We can ask: Who is my neighbor? There are those who are closest to us: the people we live with, our colleagues at work, and those in our communities. These are most obviously neighbors to us, but do we always see them as human persons? Have we come to see them as obstacles to our own happiness? Then there are those who are more remote from us. They may be brought close through modern technology, but the distance in our hearts can still remain.

In opening our hearts to others, each of us battles against pride and fear. It is Jesus who comes to love us. No one is beyond his love, and when we allow that love to enter our lives, he will open our hearts to love others.

God has loved us and accepted us, so that we can love and accept others.

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