

Homily St Pius & St Anthony 15th Sunday Ordinary Year C1

“You gotta help”. A common reaction to hearing the Good Samaritan parable is to say, “You gotta help”, but so many people may add immediately after saying that also, ‘but you gotta be careful too’. We all want to help, but you have to be careful not to worsen the problem, by becoming a victim yourself. What I mean is that there are many ways to help, and they do not all look alike. For example, if in a snowstorm I come across someone stranded after sliding off the road, I may think the best idea is to tie on a strap and pull them out, but if I don’t have enough weight or don’t have good road traction then I am going to end up being pulled into the same ditch with them. In that case, maybe just picking them up is the best thing, or calling someone for them works fine. It is just doing something that counts. Again, there are many ways to help, and a person does need to be careful, for example, someone once pointed out that this Good Samaritan may have reacted differently if he had his newborn son along with him (what he did to help may have looked differently-still helping but in a different way). The last thing we want is another vulnerable person injured or worse, because they stopped to give aid to the first. Heaven forbid it, but what if the stranded person is a decoy for the thieves to then jump you, also.

This past week at bible study, Ashley shared a good joke, that brings out this point, it is told about a man who was hitchhiking along the road. Most cars weren’t even noticing him as he raised his hand, offering a thumb looking for a ride. But finally, a truck slowed up and pulled over. And the man thought “Great-I got a ride now”. So the driver pushed the door open and the hitchhiker got in. They exchanged a few words about dropping him off at the next exit or just getting him further down the road, and after a few moments of silence between them, the hitchhiker began to compliment the driver. “Sir, I am kind of surprised that you picked me up, everyone being so careful- I’d understood if no one stopped, you just don’t know about people anymore. I am so happy you stopped, but I have to ask, if you wondered for minute whether you should--I mean I might have been a serial killer?” The driver responded, “Yeah, I thought about it a minute, but then I figured, “What’s the likelihood of ever having two serial killers in the same truck?”

Or I remember back in my seminary days, I went to St Meinrad in southern Indiana, and several of us students went hiking one Sunday afternoon around the twin lake area, of Indian & Celina lakes. Somebody got us terribly lost in the woods, so we started following creek beds back to the lake or out to a main road. And hearing cars, we came upon Hwy 37 to walk back to the parking lot eventually. But weird (safe) thing is that there are lots of signs posted along Hwy 37 (North-South) warning you not to pick up hitchhikers, as Branchville Correctional Facility is just a few miles off the highway! I am sure we looked like an escaped work detail!

But Jesus' point in the Good Samaritan story, I think it that we should always be concerned for the well-being of others, whether we are the ones directly giving the aid or still can help out more safely and wiser from a step or two back. Because the real scandal in the Good Samaritan story is that the first two passersby, didn't even check on the injured man. In fact, to make it worse, they crossed the road to provide themselves the excuse, "Oh, I don't see that man over there." And here is where I really feel the self-condemning sting. After this poor man gets clubbed, robbed and left for dead, surely help is on the way. "Oh wait, here comes somebody, and oh good, it is someone we count on, a priest from Temple (he just came from Temple- this is the time he should have the most grace about him, right? So, He helps? NO, he doesn't, and even pulls the 'look other way' trick. Okay, but here comes another one-he'll surely help, and good he is a Levite, (like the administrator of the Temple). So the Levite helps, NO, again he pulls the same move intentionally avoiding the injured man. But then comes one more chance, another guy coming down the lane. And here is the great surprise: the people hearing Jesus tell this parable know the downright hostility between the Samaritans the Jews (a lot of it is over the Jerusalem Temple- and this road is basically Temple Avenue) so Jesus' listeners would have expected, 'Oh forget him, he is not helping as he is a Samaritan, He has nothing to do with the Temple, in fact they are the ones usually laying in wait to attack us as we travel this road-they figure we are carrying treasure sacrifice to and from the Temple!) But guess what, this unlikely Samaritan proves to be the true priest--the true caregiver to a hurting soul. And not just help, while the priest and Levite did not even offer a band aid or throw bottled water over to the beaten man, this enemy Samaritan uses his own oil and wine (and depending on how tired-thirsty he was-this may have been the greatest sacrifice-his own wine), pouring them out over the wounds and bandaging them. Then he puts the man up on his own camel, which means that now the Samaritan is walking the rest of way. Bandaging the man's wounds, means that he has to tear up some of his tunic into strips. Then he prepays for the man to recuperate at an inn, with it not end there, he goes ahead and offers a bond to the innkeeper, as assurance he will pay all the man's bills when he returns back through area after his business trip. Which I think is when it gets real, and they develop lifelong relationship- the true reconciliation of enemies- a Jew and Samaritan friendship.

Now, that is neighborly! That is love, yet that was Jesus' point. This whole conversation between the lawyer and Jesus was about what we must do to find eternal life. Another way of saying, what God most wants from us? What does God ask of us? He asks us to follow Jesus on the Way of compassionate service and concern for others. The answer today from the lawyer results in Jesus teaching of the two great commands —Love God, & Love your neighbor as yourself. Love them in the Temple and in the

traffic to and from Temple. We honor and reverence God in the Temple sanctuary, yes absolutely, but we also honor Him by interacting kindly and considerately with all of the walking Temples of the Holy Spirit out here, that St Paul tells us we each one are, for one another (1 Cor 3:16). The road to heaven leads right through my brother and sister's need. I have to stay on that path with them, and for them, serving and tending to them, always seeing them as the neighbor that Jesus is showing them to be for me. Jesus shows that My neighbor is whoever needs my help, whoever is in need turns out to be the neighbor that Jesus is calling me to love and serve, just as I would love & serve Him

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