

From the Desk of the Pastoral Coordinator



The joy of Christ Jesus' great love be with you!

For the Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary time, we remember that the gospel was the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan. In my homily for that weekend, (that I presented at Our Lady Queen of Heaven) I noted that the Jewish scholar who approached Jesus really wanted to know who wasn't his neighbor so that he could justify himself or make himself appear "righteous" before the Mosaic Law. I also spoke about how we sometimes slip into thinking that if we obey all the rules of our faith and the laws of the Church, we merit, in a sense, a reward of heaven, or "eternal life."

Nothing could be further from the truth. Eternal life is a gift offered to us by God through the death and resurrection of his beloved Son, Jesus. He destroyed forever the power that sin, death and evil have over us. Through our relationship with Jesus, like in a great marriage, we want to do the right thing, we want to be generous, forgiving and inclusive because we have known and experienced God's love like the grace we experience in matrimony. We don't act lovingly merely out of obligation.

The kind of love that we experience in a deep friendship, or in a marriage, is reflective of the love that originates in God and in the life of the Holy Trinity amongst themselves resulting in love for us. Thus Jesus empties himself for us completely on the cross for us as the persons of the Trinity love one another completely.

When Jesus asks the scribe which of the three persons in the story of the Good Samaritan "was neighbor to the robbers' victim," the scribe answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus then says to the lawyer who originally wished to justify himself, "Go and do the same."

The result of the dialogue between Jesus and the scribe who wished to "test him" can never be just a point of religious law. Compassion is a wonderful thing. Perhaps the Levite and the priest who passed by Jesus felt compassion, but their biggest sin was that each failed to act. "Mercy" can be understood as the application of compassion, the action that results from suffering with another. Authentic compassion results in mercy, a selfless action focused totally on the one who is suffering. What was incredible about the Samaritan in the story is that he took a huge risk in stopping on this dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho to help the bleeding, beaten, stripped and half-dead victim with little regard for himself.

God took a risk with His Son, Jesus, for us. God became human in Jesus in complete solidarity with our humanity, born as a dependent and defenseless infant in Bethlehem. Jesus daily gave every ounce of his life and strength for us that led him throughout his public life all the way to the cross on Calvary hill. God is ultimately the Good Samaritan and we are called to act with mercy to those we come across on our own roads and travels. Jesus's words to the scholar of the Law apply to us no less today, "Go and do the same!"