



## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 10, 2016 C

### Reflections on the Parable of the Good Samaritan

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most famous. The following from my Small Christian Community commentaries gives a general overview of the parable.

#### GOSPEL: Luke 10:25-37

In this well-known parable, a scholar of the law seeks to embarrass Jesus by challenging his knowledge of the law. Jesus turns the lawyer's challenge back on him by asking him to answer his own question. Jesus answers the lawyer's second question—"Who is my neighbor?"—by telling a parable that affirms that one's neighbor is *any* person in need—irrespective of class, race, color or creed.

We should note that the priest and the Levite in the story are not the cold-hearted people that they are often made out to be. If they touched what seemed like a dead corpse, they would have incurred ritual defilement and thus be unable to carry on their duties at the Temple. Then comes a Samaritan, a half-cast and despised by Jews. But this supposedly good-for-nothing fellow is moved with great compassion for the man who is almost dead. He treats him with sympathy and tenderness and pays for his care at the local inn. The lawyer who tried to trick Jesus is now forced to recognize that his enemy is the one who showed love for the person in need. Jesus ends by exhorting all to "Go and do likewise." Christianity is not a spectator's sport; it is a call to compassionate action.

#### The Good Samaritan at table seven

All restaurant servers will love this story.

*You and your family push your way into the restaurant on a Friday night. After a long wait, you finally get a table. The place is paced—and loud. After a long wait, your waitress hurries over to your table with menus. Deena, her name tag reads. Deena cannot be more than 16 or 17—the same age as your daughter. After a quick hello and welcome, she disappears to serve*

*another table. Deena returns several minutes later to take your order—including the four different ways your party wants their burgers. You can tell she is working really hard to keep it together.*

*While you wait, Deena is summoned by the man at a nearby table. You can see and hear the encounter: he all but throws his underdone steak, his soggy French fries, and warm beer at Deena. He berates her for the slow service and dismal food. She apologizes profusely and removes the food. When she returns a few minutes later with new servings, he takes a bite and a sip, grunts and glares at her. At another table, she tries to mollify screaming children; another party changes its order four times; she collides into the kid bussing tables and a tray of glassware and dirty dishes crashes to the floor.*

*Deena finally comes to your table with your food. She has forgotten your son's onion rings and one of the soft drinks. She runs off and is back in a minute with the food. She is very apologetic. You smile and say everything's great. You say you realize it's a busy night. You say how impressed you are that she and the wait staff can serve so many hungry patrons so quickly and efficiently. She smiles a real smile for the first time all evening. "Thanks," she says. "We try."*

*You leave a larger tip than usual. And on the way out the door, you make a point of saying to the manager: "Our waitress Deena was terrific. We hope we have her again next time we're here."*

*Hearing Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, we resolve to act the same way should we ever encounter someone lying in a ditch, beaten and bruised, and near dead. But every day, without realizing it, we encounter people who are in a ditch of discouragement, who have been beaten and bruised by the abuse and anger of others, who have been left near dead in frustrating hopelessness. We don't have to look very far to find such "victims"—and we can become Good Samaritans by extending to them compassion, understanding and a helping hand. May we embrace the perspective of Christ that enables us to see one another as our "neighbors" and seek to "take care of them" as we travel together to Jericho.*

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## Witnessing the wounds

The following piece is by Fr. Flor McCarthy.

*Forty years after leaving Auschwitz, the Italian writer, Primo Levi, still bore the tattoo with the number he got while there. When people asked him why he didn't have it erased he replied, "Why should I? There are not so many of us left in the world to bear witness."*

*Alexander Solzhenitsyn says that he still has the four patches bearing the number he was given in the prison camps. He was not the only one to have brought them out of the camps. Far from being ashamed of these he says, "In some houses they will be shown to you like holy relics."*

*Nor was St. Paul ashamed of the marks he carried on his body because of Christ. In fact, he quietly drew attention to them. He said to the Galatians, "The marks on my body are those of Christ." By 'marks' he didn't mean the stigmata, such as Padre Pio and others are reputed to have had. He was talking about the scars left on his body by hardship, illness, flogging, stoning, and so on. His service of Christ had been a costly one.*

*What's more interesting still is the fact that Jesus kept the marks of the nails and the spear on his risen body. One would have expected him to have shed them to show that all that was behind him, and because he didn't want to embarrass the apostles who abandoned him or the people who were directly or indirectly responsible for causing them.*

*But Jesus did not shed those wounds. He retained them. For him those wound were not things to be ashamed of or embarrassed about. They were the living proof of his love, the tangible and telling signs of how costly real love can be. They were more like badges of honour, or hard-won medals of distinction. They were still wounds but the poison had gone out of them, and so they no longer hurt. Because the wounds of Jesus are still visible on his risen body, they have become a source of hope for all of us, especially for those who have suffered and who still suffer.*

*So many times we want to hide our wounds. We want to cover up the hurts of the past. Even when they have healed outwardly, often the poison remains, so that they still hurt. If we love, we must be prepared to get wounded. However, it would serve no great purpose if we thereby were poisoned by bitterness and resentment. Bitterness is internal decay. "People can live through great hardship yet perish from hard feelings" (Solzhenitsyn).*

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## A Supreme Court justice impacted by a Good Samaritan

*Felix Frankfurter was a famous justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Once when he was hospitalized, he came to know a nurse by the name of Lucy. They had long chats during which he found out a lot about her. She was a devout Catholic. He was not a Catholic, and indeed had no time for any other denomination either. Yet he was very struck by Lucy.*

*Never before had he met generosity or kindness such as she possessed. And he started to ask questions and to reflect, trying to discover the wellspring of her behavior. What he discovered was this: the wellspring was no mystery. It was simply a practical application of her faith. He was truly amazed because he had never known anyone whose everyday life was based on a religion as much as that nurse's was.*

*Lucy may never have known the impact her lived faith had, but she made Jesus a palpable presence in that hospital. She supplied the hands Jesus needed there. Jesus needs the witness of people such as Lucy so that he can be the consoler he wants to be.*

*A real relationship with Jesus will have an impact, even when the person who has that relationship does not mention Jesus. Of course, those who believe in Jesus and love him, will also, when it is appropriate, speak openly of Jesus.*

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## Oskar Schindler—a 'bad' Catholic who was a very good neighbor

Oskar Schindler (remember the movie *Schindler's List*) was raised a Catholic. He got married and became a notorious womanizer, big drinker and wheeler-dealer. He was the kind of person that devout Christians could understandably condemn as depraved and bad. Yet, this depraved creature risked his life several times to protect the lives of 1,000 Jews. After the war was over, Schindler led his 1,000 or so Jews into some good Catholic and Christian villages. Several of these villages did what they could to keep the Jews out of their town.

Isn't it amazing how some of us can be so prayerful and religious yet downright un-Christian, while others whom we might be quick to condemn, are much better at responding to the neighbor in need, and are in fact closer to God!

We might ask: Who was neighbor to the Jews: the notorious, fallen-away Catholic or the church-going Catholic?

**Patricia Sanchez writes:**

Patricia Sanchez sees today's Gospel as a call to *magnanimity* and then tells the following story about Abraham Lincoln to illustrate her point.

*In a letter to General Rosecrans, Commander of the Army of the Southwest, the President discussed the proposed execution of a Confederate Officer. Lincoln wrote:*

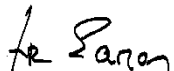
*"I have examined personally all the papers in the Lyons case, and I cannot see that it is a matter for executive interference. So, I turn it over to you with full confidence that you will do what is just and right; only begging you, my dear General, to do nothing in reprisal for the past—only what is necessary to ensure security for the future; and remind you that we are not fighting against a foreign foe, but our brothers, and that our aim is not to break their spirits but only to bring back their old allegiance. Conquer by kindness—let that be our policy.*

*Very truly yours, A. Lincoln."*

*In his policy of conquering by kindness, Lincoln may have been encouraging General Rosecrans to "conquer by kindness," as it were, by treating the confederate officer with a mercy he did not expect and may not have reciprocated if the situation were reversed. Or Lincoln may have been calling upon his general to conquer himself and, rather than give in to his hatred for an enemy and a desire to avenge the lives of countless Union soldiers, to surrender that hatred and those desires and sublimate them unto kindness. Surely the Samaritans had a history of enmity with the Jews not unlike that which fomented between the North and South in the United States of America during its Civil War. Animosity had grown and mutual mistrust had become so unwieldy as to make peace seem an impossibility. Do not these same animosities continue to separate what should be kindred peoples all over the planet? Think of Rwanda, Chechnya, Darfur, Congo, etc. Because these hatreds continue to smoulder and separate, believers also continue to be called by God to magnanimity, and to a thoroughgoing sympathy (empathy) for the plight of all others whom they are to perceive, not as enemies, but as neighbors.*

*Many years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, commenting on today's parable in a small book called Strength to Love, noted what the priest and Levite asked: 'What will happen to me if I stop to help the wounded man?' and what the Good Samaritan asked: 'What will happen to the wounded man if I don't stop?'*

Have a blessed week,



***Prayer to be a Good Samaritan***

***God of love, give us a deep love for you,  
so that we can see the world as you see it,  
feel the compassion you feel,  
and be a people whose lives mediate your  
love to others.***

***So open our eyes that we might see  
what the Good Samaritan saw.  
Grant us the insight to see the need in others,  
the wisdom to know what to do,  
and the will to do it.***

***And so we pray for all those, who in many and  
various ways, have been stripped, beaten  
and left for dead.***

***We pray for children who must grow up  
in the most awful of circumstances,  
especially for those starved of love,  
or food, or shelter or security.  
May they receive the future  
you have planned for them.***

***We pray for those we might cross  
the road to avoid,  
who have been excluded socially because  
of their race, their financial status,  
or their history.  
May the dignity that is theirs be restored  
to them.***

***We pray for those whose need we would  
rather not face up to,  
because it requires action of us,  
those who suffer atrocities because of war,  
unjust trade rules, or oppressive governments.  
May the world receive a true picture of their  
suffering and the factors that cause it,  
that justice may be done.***

***Open our eyes, that we might not cross  
the road from human need.  
Give us a deep love for you,  
that we might see your love at work  
in this world, and that we might 'Go  
and do likewise.'***