

## GOSPEL

LUKE 10:25-37

There was a lawyer who, to disconcert Jesus, stood up and said to him, ‘Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? What do you read there?’ He replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.’ ‘You have answered right,’ said Jesus. ‘Do this and life is yours.’

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said “and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have.” 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’ he replied. Jesus said to him, ‘Go, and do the same yourself.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today the Gospel presents the well-known parable of the “Good Samaritan”. When questioned by a doctor of the law on what is necessary to inherit eternal life, Jesus invites him to find the answer in the Scriptures, and says: “You shall love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself”. There were, however, different interpretations of who was intended as “neighbour”. In fact, that man also asks: “And who is my neighbour?”. At this point, Jesus responds with the parable, this beautiful parable — I invite all of you to take up the Gospel today. It is one of the most beautiful parables in the Gospel. And this parable has become the paradigm of Christian life. It has become the example of how a Christian should act. Thanks to the Gospel of Luke, we have this treasure.

The protagonist of the brief narrative is a Samaritan who, along the road encounters a man stripped and beaten by robbers, and takes care of him. We know that the Jews treated Samaritans with contempt, considering them as outsiders to the chosen people. Thus, it is no coincidence that Jesus chooses precisely a Samaritan as the positive character in the parable. In this way he seeks to overcome prejudice, by showing that even a foreigner, even one who does not know the true God and does not attend his temple, is capable of acting according to His will, showing compassion for a needy brother and helping him with all the means at his disposal.

Along that same road, before the Samaritan, a priest and a Levite had already passed — that is, people dedicated to the worship of God. However, on seeing the poor man on the ground, they continued on without stopping, probably so as not to be contaminated with his blood. They had prioritized a human rule — not to be contaminated with blood — linked to worship, over the great commandment of God who wants mercy above all.

Jesus therefore, offers the Samaritan as an example — precisely one who did not have faith! Let us also consider the many people we know, perhaps agnostics, who do good. As a model, Jesus chooses one who was not a man of faith. And this man, by loving his brother as himself, shows that he loves God with all his heart and with all his strength — the God whom he does not know! — and at the same time expresses true religiosity and full humanity.

After recounting this very beautiful parable, Jesus again addresses the doctor of the law who had asked Him “Who is my neighbour?”, and Jesus asks him: “Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?”. In this way he throws the question back to his interlocutor, and also overturns the mindset of us all. He makes us understand that based on our criteria, it is not we who define who is neighbour and who is not, but it is the person in a situation of need who must be able to recognize who is his neighbour, that is, “the one who showed mercy on him” (v. 37). Being able to have compassion: this is the key. This is our key. If you do not feel compassion before a needy person, if your heart is not moved, it means that something is not right. Be careful; let us be careful.

Let us not allow ourselves to get carried away by egotistical insensitivity. The capacity for compassion has become the touchstone of Christians, indeed of the teachings of Jesus. Jesus himself is the Father’s compassion towards us. If you go along the street and see a homeless person lying there and pass him by without looking at him or you think: “well, it’s

the effect of wine. He is a drunk”, do not ask yourself whether the man is drunk; ask yourself whether your heart has hardened, whether your heart has turned to ice. This conclusion indicates that mercy towards a human life in a state of need is the true face of love. This is how one becomes a true disciple of Jesus and the face of the Father is manifested: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). And God, our Father, is merciful because he is compassionate. He is able to have this compassion, to draw near to our suffering, our sin, our vices, our miseries.

May the Virgin Mary help us to understand and above all to experience ever more the unbreakable bond between God, our Father, and concrete and generous love for our brothers and sisters, and may she give us the grace to be compassionate and to grow in compassion.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The first commandment in this passage is Love of God, Neighbour and Self? What might this ‘love’ mean, as distinct from or rather than ‘like’, ‘accept’, ‘tolerate’, or ‘admire’?

The neighbour is the person towards which we ‘prove’ ourselves to be ‘neighbour’. It is easy to say ‘everyone’s my neighbour’ but another thing to ‘prove to be a neighbour’. It can mean going beyond rules and regulations into matters of the heart and compassion. How might Jesus be calling upon you to become a neighbour to him and his people?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.