

October 5, 2026 - Monday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time, even-numbered year

Gal 1:6-12; Lk 10:25-37

H O M I L Y

This very vivid account from the Gospel of Luke, which we have just read, began with an important question posed to Jesus by a teacher of the Law. It was a very good question—personal and practical. In fact, he did not ask in an abstract way, “Which is the greatest commandment?” but rather: “What must I do?” Jesus said to him, “You are a teacher of the Law; you should know this. What do you read in your Law?” And the man then gave the correct answer: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” “Very good!” said Jesus. “Do that, and you will have eternal life.” The teacher felt that the conversation had ended a little too abruptly, so he asked another question: “But then... who is my neighbor?”

Jesus answers this second question with a parable. And it is important to remember that the entire parable that follows is an answer to this question: “Who is my neighbor?”; for, when he has finished telling the parable, Jesus will return specifically to this question: “Who do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” With this question, Jesus will compel the teacher to identify with the man who fell into the ditch after being beaten by the robbers. (Let us remember that the technique of the parable as a form of teaching consisted of leading the listeners to identify with one of the characters in the story.)

Let’s revisit the structure of the story. The teacher had asked, “Who is my neighbor?” and Jesus rephrases the same question at the end: “Who was a neighbor to the man who was attacked?” The teacher can only answer, “His neighbor was the one who showed him compassion.” If we keep all this in mind, we will realize that when Jesus says, “Go and do likewise,” the immediate meaning is not “Go and be a Good Samaritan yourself,” but rather: “Like the man who fell victim to the robbers, accept—you too—that even a Samaritan can be your neighbor.”

Jesus asks us to transcend—through love—all the divisions we create among ourselves. Transposed into today’s world, the division between Samaritans and Jews would be the division between the poor and

the rich, between developed and underdeveloped countries, between capitalists and communists, between advocates of globalization and its victims, between Blacks and Whites, between conservatives and progressives, between citizens and undocumented immigrants, and so on.

For us, the one on the other side is usually the one who is in the wrong. Jesus invites us to recognize the presence of compassion in such a person and to accept help from them. The Samaritan, in this parable, is traveling. As for the priest and the Levite, they are at home and therefore have a lot to do. They don't have time to help. They also have everything they need. They are self-sufficient and fail to recognize their neighbor. But the Samaritan is traveling. He is outside his normal environment. He has come to a foreign land in search of something. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was very dangerous, especially for a Samaritan. He was a poor man, someone who knew contempt, danger, and fear. He was therefore open to compassion.

If we apply all of this to today's world, who is the person who fell into the ditch and was attacked by robbers? It is the one who left Jerusalem to go down to Jericho: the one who left the safety of the holy city, with its comforts and certainties, to seek something else, heading toward the unknown, like Abraham. It is, for example, the person seeking alternative models of social, political, economic, or religious life. It is the person who has left the system or been expelled by the system. Having strayed from the well-trodden paths followed by the crowds, such a person is vulnerable, more prone than others to making mistakes—even serious ones. They can easily find themselves in the gutter—which, incidentally, may be their salvation. Such people are found everywhere, especially in prisons or in disreputable places. Wherever they are, they will easily be ignored by the Levites and priests, except to receive lessons in good behavior from them. Let us hope that one day they encounter a Samaritan.

The Good Samaritan of today's world is the person who has left behind the security and comfort of his or her own little world and who wants to learn from others new ways of thinking and living. Because he or she is in a constant state of insecurity—whether chosen or, at any rate, accepted—he or she can have compassion for those who have fallen. Only if we embark on such a journey, as Christ did, will we be able to help our brothers and sisters—not to fulfill a law, or to earn merit in heaven, or for the pleasure of being good and generous, but simply because we will be “moved by compassion.”

As a practical conclusion: it would be all too easy to resolve to be good Samaritans toward those around us. Instead, let us listen to the first lesson of Jesus' parable. Let us accept the fact

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that we have all, in various ways, fallen into the ditch. Our first challenge is to accept that our neighbor—the one who will help us—will be the very person we tend to consider unworthy—those for whose conversion we are accustomed to praying.

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