

15th Sunday OT – The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37

Our readings from Luke these next three Sundays can all be linked with the question of the lawyer, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The lawyer is learned enough in the Law to answer his own question; he is to love God and to love his neighbor. His problem was, "***Who is my neighbor?***"

The story is simple enough. A traveler falls among robbers on a steep, desert road. He is left naked and half-dead by the roadside. His need was absolute. Religious people, a priest and Levite, pass by. If they were on their way to perform religious duties, they were in a dilemma. Contact with a corpse would disqualify them from their responsibilities. They passed by, refusing the *absolute need* of the sufferer.

A third traveler came. He was a foreigner. Like Jesus though, seeing the plight of the widow, he was overwhelmed by pity. He spared none of the resources he had, his oil, his wine, even his donkey. He paid the innkeeper the fruit of two days' labor and promised to return to meet any further debts.

Yes, said the lawyer, this third man proved himself a neighbor. (Notice that the lawyer could not even speak the word *Samaritan*). Jesus told him to do the same. His original question was like those the crowds addressed to John the Baptist, "Then what should we do?" John's answers had been decent enough but were trite compared with the answer Christ gave. This parable tells us how repentance implies a complete change of outlook and behavior towards others.

Today's gospel also reminds us of the Sixth Characteristic of a Marianist Parish, from April 2009 and presented by Fr. George Cerniglia, Assistant for Religious Life at the time, titled: ***Promote Peace, Justice, the Integrity of Creation, and Service***. Even though this characteristic is not on our list it is certainly implied by the St. Francis de Sales activities of our parishioners.

Marianists understand that the direct proclamation of the Gospel and cultural transformation must be accomplished in union with those who struggle for justice, freedom, and dignity for all people. *Marianist Parish Ministry* is noted for its care of the least and the forgotten, both inside and outside the parish. Work for justice in *Marianist Parish Ministry* takes the form of ***advocacy, education, and service***. More importantly, *Marianist Parish Ministry*

provides educational opportunities to train parishioners in methodologies to transform the social structures that cause injustice, war, and the abuse of God's creation.

Fr. Walter J. Burghardt writes in today's reflection from *Give Us This Day* that most of the world has "fallen among robbers." Through our ministry here at St. Francis de Sales we are the Good Samaritan when we participate in the ministries here at the parish in one way or another. Even attending the program on **Ukraine** that furthers our understanding of what is happening in the world uses at least one of the three, education, to promote the sixth characteristic and how we can be Good Samaritans without leaving our country.

As for playing Good Samaritan for those directly around us, the best support is through our recognition of the individual in need and using means that will help them to grow in integrity and independence but also without making them depend on our generosity, even though indirectly. For the homeless, it is a long journey to independent living and all the responsibilities that come with it that the rest of us sometimes take for granted.

My own experience in our Marianist parish in Cleveland where we had the programs to serve the homeless with our Hot Meals and Food Pantry and alternative sleeping arrangements for the night, is that "**living on the streets**" became a preferred option for many, especially those without children, because of the freedom it gave them from the stresses of everyday life. There are alternatives to giving cash, like gift cards for food services in the area. The problem of giving out cash is that it can be used on other items rather than on necessities.

It is one thing then the homeless want to change their condition, and it is another when they expect others to support them so they prefer to live on the streets. For the few who want to change they still need accompaniment because of the psychological burden many carry. That is why it is best to listen to the advice of those who have been in the ministry of service to the homeless for years. I am convinced that there are the Good Samaritans here in our parish and in our country. Sometimes it takes a disaster to expose the good works that many already do but without notice.