

Sunday 15th (C) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 10,25-37): A teacher of the Law came and began putting Jesus to the test. And he said, «Master, what shall I do to receive eternal life?». Jesus replied, «What is written in the Scripture? How do you understand it?». The man answered, «It is written: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself’». Jesus replied, «What a good answer! Do this and you shall live».

The man wanted to keep up appearances, so he replied, «Who is my neighbor?». Jesus then said, «There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. It happened that a priest was going along that road and saw the man, but passed by on the other side. Like-wise a Levite saw the man and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, too, was going that way, and when he came upon the man, he was moved with compassion. He went over to him and treated his wounds with oil and wine and wrapped them with bandages. Then he put him on his own mount and brought him to an inn where he took care of him. The next day he had to set off, but he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and told him: ‘Take care of him and whatever you spend on him, I will repay when I come back’».

Jesus then asked, «Which of these three, do you think, made himself neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?». The teacher of the Law answered, «The one who had mercy on him». And Jesus said, «Go then and do the same».

«A Samaritan was moved with compassion. He went over to him and treated his wounds. Then he put him on his own mount...»

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Today, we might wonder: «Who is my neighbor?» (Lk 10:29). Some inquisitive Jews were wondering why their rabbi disappeared on Saturday vigils. They suspected he had a secret, maybe with God, and they entrusted someone to follow him..., what he, quite moved, did to a wretched slum. There he saw the rabbi cooking and sweeping at some woman's home: she was a paralytic, and the rabbi was serving her and preparing her some special meal for the festivity. When the spy came back, the Jews asked him: «Where did he go, to Heaven, amongst clouds and stars?». But the spy answered: «No!, he climbed up much higher».

To love our neighbor with good deeds is the highest up we can climb; it is where true love is made manifest, not just passing by on the other side: In a document, the 2nd Vatican Ecumenical Council, asserts «Christ himself raises his voice amongst the poor so as to stir up his disciples' charity».

To be a good Samaritan means to change our plans («he went over to him»), dedicating our time («he took care of him»)... Which allows us to contemplate the figure of the innkeeper, as His Holiness John Paul II points out: «What could the Samaritan have done without him? In fact, the innkeeper, remaining anonymous, is who takes care of the toughest part of the job. We can all act like him if we fulfill our own task with a spirit of service. Every occupation offers the more or less direct possibility to help the needy (...). The faithful accomplishment of our own professional duties already implies the practice of our loving all persons as well as our society».

To leave everything to harbor he who needs it (the good Samaritan) and to do well our job for love (the innkeeper), are the two ways for us to love our neighbor: «‘Which (...) made himself neighbor’ (...). ‘The one who had mercy on him’. And Jesus said, ‘Go then and do the same’» (Lk 10:36-37).

We turn to the Virgin Mary and She —who is a living example!— will help us discovering our neighbors' material and spiritual needs.