

Monday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 10:25-37): There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test Jesus and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Fr. Ivan LEVYTSKYY CSsR

Today, the gospel's message indicates the path to life: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart... and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27). And since God has loved us in the first place He leads us to the union with Him. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "We need this intimate union with God in our daily life. And how can we achieve it? Through prayer." Being in oneness with Him we begin to experience that with Him everything is possible, even to love our neighbor.

Someone said that Christians enter the church to love God and come out to love their neighbors. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI highlights that the Christian's program – the program of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' program – is "a heart which can see." See and stop! In this parable there are two people who see the needy, but they don't stop. This is why Christ has reproached the Pharisees saying: "Do you have eyes and not see?" (Mk 8:18). On the contrary, the Samaritan sees and stops, he has mercy and thus saves the life of the needy and his own.

When the famous Catalan architect Antonio Gaudí was run over by a tramway some bystanders didn't stop to help that injured old man. He carried no documents and looked like a beggar. Had they realized who that neighbor was, surely they would have stayed in line to help him.

When we practice the good, we think we do it for our neighbor, but we really do it also for Christ: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). And Benedict XVI says my neighbor is anyone who needs me and I can help. If everyone seeing his neighbors in need would stop and have mercy on them once a day or once a week the crisis would decrease and the world would become better. "Nothing makes us resemble God more than good deeds" (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"For ours is no trifling aim, but our endeavour is for eternal life." (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem)

- “In the messianic programme of Christ, which is at the same time the programme of the Kingdom of God, suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbour.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “(...) We cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: ‘Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.’ (1 Jn 3:15) (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1033)

Other comments

«The one who had mercy on him»

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Today, a Teacher of the Law asks Jesus the kind of question we may have asked ourselves more than once, in our life: «Master, what shall I do to receive eternal life?» (Lk 10:25). He wanted to put Jesus to the test. The Master, though, wisely answers what is written in the Scriptures, that is, to love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself (cf. Lk 10:27). The key is to love. If we seek the eternal life, we know that «faith and hope will go away, but love will remain forever» (cf. 1Cor 13:13). Any life project, any spirituality, that does not have love in its center takes us further away from the actual meaning of our existence. An often forgotten but important reference point is to love oneself. Only from our personal identity can we love God and our neighbors.

The teacher of the Law goes still further when asking Jesus: «Who is my neighbor?» (Lk 10:29). And he gets his answer with a tale, a parable, a little story, far away from complicated theories, but with a clear message. The model of the loving person is a Samaritan, that is, someone who is a dropout, someone excluded from God's people. When they saw the man beaten and half-dead, a priest and a Levite just ignored him and passed by. Those who apparently are closer to God (the priest and the Levite) are those who are farther away from their neighbor. The teacher of the Law avoids saying the word “Samaritan” to state who did behave as neighbor to the wounded man: «The one who had mercy on him» (Lk 10:37).

Jesus' proposal is clear: «Go then and do the same». It is not a theoretical conclusion of the debate but an invitation to live the reality of love, which is not only an ethereal feeling but a behavior that overcomes social discrimination and arises from a person's heart. St. John of the Cross reminds us «at the twilight of your life you will only be examined of love».