October 11th: Memorial of Saint John XXIII, pope

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."

"And who is my neighbor?"

Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint John XXIII, who belonged to the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) since he was 14. His life was a long journey starting from the simplicity of his peasant family: seminary student, priest, episcopal secretary, spiritual director and professor of church history in the seminary, diplomat, cardinal, Nuncio of Pope Pius XII in France, Pope and initiator of the Second Vatican Council

Along this path, he was mainly a shepherd according to the heart of God, who smells of sheep, following the words said by Pope Francis. He was of those who do not "pass by on the other side" (cf. Lk 10:31-32), as today's Gospel says, when seeing the man beaten by the robbers, abandoned on the edge of the road

and placed at the roadside of humanity. John XXIII is a shepherd of those who put himself at the service of those who live in the peripheries, according to another felicitous phrase from the Pope.

Today Jesus makes a hard criticism to the Church people -priest, levite- who do not divert from their path to meet the unfortunates because they are convinced of already fulfilling their service at the temple, which is already enough for them, and there is no need to worry about the others.

On the other hand, Jesus considers in the parable of the Good Samaritan who the “neighbor” of his brother really is. Indeed, when approaching someone who is away, who is different, we become "neighbors". Jesus praises those who know how to approach and get close to the others. The person of Saint John XXIII is an excellent model for us. He saw these forgotten brothers not like outcasts, but simply as brothers. He always said: “Let us approach each other, know each other, love each other, and then we will answer the prayer of Jesus: let us all be one”.

As we meditate on the Gospel of this feast, surely Jesus is also telling us: “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37).