

## **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**July 13, 2025 – reflection**

**Jesus, image of our God.**

**All your heart and all your soul.**

**Love with heart and mind.**

**-rvb.**

### **Reading 1**

#### **Deuteronomy 30:10-14**

**Moses said to the people:**

**"If only you would heed the voice of the LORD, your God,  
and keep his commandments and statutes  
that are written in this book of the law,  
when you return to the LORD, your God,  
with all your heart and all your soul.**

**"For this command that I enjoin on you today  
is not too mysterious and remote for you.  
It is not up in the sky, that you should say,  
'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us  
and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?'  
Nor is it across the sea, that you should say,  
'Who will cross the sea to get it for us  
and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?'  
No, it is something very near to you,  
already in your mouths and in your hearts;  
you have only to carry it out."**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures**

Today's readings are about matters and affairs of the heart. Deuteronomy proclaims "No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts." Luke writes, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...and your neighbor as yourself." Paul considers all of life to have meaning in the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ." The author/psychologist, Erich Fromm wrote: "Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world, all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, 'I love you, I must be able to say, 'I love in you everybody, I love the world through you, I love in you also myself.'" Thus, the Good Samaritan exemplified compassionate action not only for the man by the wayside, but for the world. The Good Samaritan is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world.

In the first reading from Deuteronomy, remembrance, repentance, restoration, and return comprise the first half of chapter 30. Despite the people's infidelities, God is faithful to his covenant, willing to forgive, and calls them to conversion, a change of heart which includes the whole person - heart, head, soul, being, strength, emotions, and

physical. Conversion/change of heart/metanoia means turning back to the essentials of the covenant, fulfilling the revelation of God within us. Conversion is to be again who we really are; remembrance to whom we belong, naming our infidelities and returning to God who says, come as far as you can, and I will come the rest of the way. Conversion involves two movements of the heart and soul: a repentance, a turning from the attractions of the world; second, and in faith, a turning to the covenant God. Conversion is a process and a call to repentance and faith. "It is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out."

Conversion happens at every level – personal, social, spiritual economic, psychological, and political. Conversion can lead to compassionate action as evidenced in the story of the Good Samaritan. It is conscious recognition of a problem and doing something about it.

### Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37](#)

R. (cf. 33) **Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.**

I pray to you, O LORD,

for the time of your favor, O God!

In your great kindness answer me

with your constant help.

Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness:

in your great mercy turn toward me.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

I am afflicted and in pain;

let your saving help, O God, protect me.

I will praise the name of God in song,

and I will glorify him with thanksgiving.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

"See, you lowly ones, and be glad;

you who seek God, may your hearts revive!

For the LORD hears the poor,

and his own who are in bonds he spurns not."

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

For God will save Zion

and rebuild the cities of Judah.

The descendants of his servants shall inherit it,

and those who love his name shall inhabit it.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

## Reading 2

### Colossians 1:15-20

**Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation.**

For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth,  
the visible and the invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;  
all things were created through him and for him.

He is before all things,

and in him all things hold together.

He is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that in all things he himself might be preeminent.

**For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,  
and through him to reconcile all things for him,**

**making peace by the blood of his cross  
through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**In this reading from Colossians, the context is Paul responding to the Gnostics who maintained Jesus was only one among the heavenly forces with whom people had to be accountable. Gnostics distinguished matter from spirit, viewing the material world as essentially evil, and thus estranged from God. Paul responds by saying it is Jesus' mission to restore all things, "to reconcile everything in his person." We are reconciled with God in baptism, and through the blood of the cross.**

**In this doctrinal section (1-2:3) Paul eloquently establishes the pre-eminence of Christ. He is the centerpiece of the universe. Ilia Delio, theologian writes in an eloquent fashion, "The cosmic Christ who is the head of the body, the Church, and the first born of the dead. Christ is God's new creation. Fullness resides with him. Science reveals that everything is both matter and energy/spirit co-mingling as one; this is a Christocentric world. This realization changes everything. Matter has become a holy substance, and the material world is the place where we**

can comfortably worship God just by walking on matter, by loving it, and by respecting it. Christ is God's active power inside of the physical world. Christ is present in the entire cosmos, from the least particle of matter to the convergent human community. The Incarnation is a making new of all the universe's forces and powers. Personal divine love is invested organically with all of creation, in the heart of matter, unifying the world." -Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Orbis Books: 2013), 24-25.

Alleluia

[Cf. John 6:63c, 68c](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life;  
you have the words of everlasting life.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

[Luke 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."

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**This parable in the Gospel of Luke packs a lot of punch, catching us by surprise, demanding the impossible, tugging at our moral sensibilities, calling for moral courage, and challenging us to show compassionate action. Such is the nature of a parable as fleshed out in a poem I composed entitled, Parable Power.**

### **Parable Power**

**Parable praises the good Samaritan and kisses the person with leprosy.**

**Parable challenges us to abandon our hidden agendas.**

**Parable says “yes” to our “no;” it gnaws away at our inners.**

**Parable adds the syllables of life to death.**

**Parable shreds our paper-mâché’ egos.**

**Parable stretches our one-dimensional selves into three dimensional others.**

**Parable strips and rapes our mental categories without guilt, in a shameless fashion.**

**Parable leaves our words breathless.**

**Parable proclaims, presses, and pesters.**

**Parable rattles our psychic security and our rational walls.**

**Parable impels us – Let go!**

**Parable is the narrow passage in the hourglass of our lives through which all**

**our experiences must flow, for better or worse.**



**Parable is God in the making.**

**Parable is Christ in the fleshing of God's making.**

**Parable, myth, and symbol are now bonded by cosmic glue, gently  
applied by  
the facile fingers of God.**

**However, the challenge to come to the aid of another (known or unknown) is influenced by the following findings of variables that may or may not ethically or morally move us to come to one's assistance which are:**

**Studies influenced by the Good Samaritan Experiment and Bystander Effect:**

- 1. Darley & Latané (1968) – Bystander Intervention. Study A classic study that found people were less likely to help when they thought others could act. Built on the Good Samaritan findings to show that situational factors shape moral behavior more than personal character.**
- 2. Milgram's Obedience Study (1963) -Although primarily about authority, Milgram's study also showed how situational pressure influences moral choices. Like in the Good Samaritan study, people made decisions that contradicted their moral beliefs due to external pressures such as:**

**Situational pressures (like time pressure) influence helping behavior more than moral values.**

- 1. Simply thinking about kindness does not guarantee kind actions.**

- 2. Religious beliefs alone do not predict moral behavior.**
- 3. Stress and being in a hurry make people less empathetic and less likely to help.**
- 4. Creating an environment with less urgency can promote prosocial behavior.**
- 5. Color of skin**
- 6. Size of the community**
- 7. Weather conditions**
- 8. Models were rarely needed; the public usually helped quickly on their own.**
- 9. Ill victims are more likely to be helped than drunk ones (62/65 trials compared to 19/38) and are more likely to be helped quickly.**
- 10. Males are more likely to help than females.**
- 11. The longer no help is offered, the less important modeling becomes, and the more likely someone is to leave the area, and more so with drunk victims.**

**3. Piliavin et al. (1969) – Subway Helping Experiment -Examined how race, appearance, and situation affected helping behavior. Found that people were more likely to help when they felt personally responsible and had fewer exit options.**

**4. Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (1971) -Reinforced the idea that situational context overrides personal morality, just as in the Good Samaritan study, it helped explain how environmental pressures can suppress helping behaviors.**

**Conclusions: The Good Samaritan experiment shows us that, although we have good intentions, our behavior can be influenced by external factors. This makes us reflect on our own ability to help others, and**

how we can overcome social obstacles that prevent us from acting compassionately.

For Luke, a neighbor is anyone who shows mercy and compassion, however it is not always that simple to act given the evidence and results of good Samaritan/By-stander effect experiments and results. These results should not deter nor discourage us from showing compassion. In the Gospel of Luke, the author focuses on who is the neighbor, realizing the legalists accepted the law mandating love of God, but they debated the categories of people included in the word “neighbor.” Thus, to make the point clear, Luke makes a hero of the Samaritan, a non-Jew, and therefore, one who would be excluded from the category of neighbor. By striving to show compassion, the Samaritan becomes a member of God’s community. Community is a place where people are open to genuine conversion. Community preserves and nurtures the ongoing process of conversion. Community reaches out in compassion, in faith, turning to those who have fallen by the wayside.

“True compassion does not come from wanting to help out those less fortunate than ourselves, but from realizing our kinship with all beings.” – Pema Chodron.

**The path of compassionate action that we share daily extends to the broader social realm within our academic community as evidenced by the testimony above of one who wishes and desires to do more.**

**Mirabi Bush and co-author Ram Dass of *Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service*, offer some practical guidelines:**

- 1. Reflect on what is calling you to action---what causes your heart to tremble?**
- 2. Think about what you really love to do, and do not do what everyone else is doing because that is what is expected of you.**
- 3. Consider your time, your treasure, and your talents.**
- 4. Investigate your motives. Do not judge them and view them dispassionately.**
- 5. Start with humble goals.**
- 6. Begin right where you are.**
- 7. Do not be side-tracked by second-guessing yourself.**
- 8. Be aware of the suffering of others be it physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, or social.**

9. **Decide if you want to be part of a community service project or want to work alone or with a few friends.**
10. **Once a commitment is made, be open to surprises and mistakes.**
11. **Be conscious that we are all interconnected, when one of us suffers, all suffer.**
12. **Be good and take care of yourself – helping others and helping ourselves are separate ways of the same reality.**
13. **Take the leap; once you have reflected on who you are, what is calling you, and how you might respond, then just do it!**

**Final prayer:** Loving Father, you catch us by surprise at times. Jesus, the parable teller, demands the impossible of us, which is to love those who are not members of our tribe. May your Holy Spirit grace us with love and compassion that we may have the strength and courage to rise above those variables and situations that strive to blind us from the realities of life.