

HOMILY 15TH SUN OT YRC 2019

We have very little duty to help one another in our culture. In fact, you have no duty under the law to help anyone in need unless you have a special relationship with them. Parents have a duty to take care of minor children, doctors and nurses have a duty to take care of their patients. Lawyers have a duty to represent their clients, but all of these duties are very limited. Many jurisdictions have Good Samaritan laws, but these laws do not promote the spirit of the Gospel. These laws just protect you if you try to help someone and they are not satisfied with your help so that they cannot sue you. That is it, pretty pitiful.

The scholar of the law in the Gospel reading knew Jesus law of love, he could recite it by heart, but he could not live it. He was looking to limit his duty to love, to limit that duty to special relationships as we have done in our civil law. He got an answer he did not bargain for. Jesus outlined a scenario in which most people would not see a duty to love, to help, and makes it the standard for his law of love. Let's look at it.

First of all, the Samaritan was traveling in Jewish territory. The Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies. No one would expect the Samaritan to help the Jew. But the Samaritan was moved with compassion and helped him. He saw him as a fellow human being in need and loved him. Jesus calls us to do that in our lives. That is what right to life is all about. It is about respecting the dignity of all human life, all human life, not just the people to whom you feel you owe a duty. And what about the victim? If he was conscious he probably would have told the Samaritan to leave him alone. He probably would have rather died than be cared for by a Samaritan. The Samaritan would not be expected to help the Jew, and the Jew would probably have rejected his help, but he did the right thing anyway. We have to stop looking at other people as us and them. It is just us.

It is pretty easy to criticize the priest and the Levite for passing by the injured man on the opposite side. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, they may have thought the man was dead. If they touched a dead body they would be considered to be ritually unclean and would have to go through a long purification ritual before they could participate in their ministry. Maybe they were off on an important ministry and would be prevented from doing it if they stopped. And maybe they just did not have the gifts or the possessions to help him. After all, most of us would not care for the man the way the Samaritan did. If we found ourselves in this situation we would likely call 911, but that is it. Even if a doctor or nurse found themselves in this situation, they would likely call 911 and wait for the paramedics. They have the gifts, but would probably not have the medical supplies with them to treat him. And that would be the right thing to do. The Samaritan had the gifts and the possessions to care for the man and he cared for him. And there was no possibility that he would be repaid for his kindness. He did the right thing anyway. We need to see our gifts and possessions not as treasures to be guarded, but rather as treasures to be used to help others.

Mother Theresa is probably the perfect example of living out the love that Jesus is calling us to in the Gospel reading today. She went to a foreign country, India, to do her ministry. She certainly had no duty to help there. She freely used her gifts and her possessions to love and serve others. She served the poorest of the poor, the throw away people in that culture who were dying. They were not going to get better and repay her. And when she started her ministry the majority of the people of India thought she was trying to convert the people of India and they just wanted her out. They did not want her help. How did Mother Theresa love and serve the poor in this situation day after day. I am certainly no Mother Theresa, and I would never be able to do

what she did, but I did find a prayer that she kept in her room that has inspired me to do better. I want to share that prayer with you.

MOTHER THERESA PRAYER

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.

Be honest anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.

Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.

Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.

Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.