

# Sunday, July 14, 2019

## 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Responsorial: Psalm 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36-37

2nd Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

## What Does It Mean to “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”

*Who is my neighbor? (Luke 10:29)*

As much as we might fault this scribe for trying to test Jesus, it was a fair question. The specific command to love your neighbor as yourself appears only once in the Hebrew Bible: “Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). So you can imagine the scribe wondering, *Isn't my neighbor only those of my own people?*

Perhaps Jesus meant something more, as Scripture says a few verses later: “Treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34). *But what about aliens who don't live in my village? What about strangers or people I meet on the road?*

That's the beauty of Jesus' parable. The victim in the story was a stranger, a man of unknown origin, lying bleeding in the no-man's-land between Israel and Jericho. Should anyone have felt obligated to help him? Surely not the priest or the Levite! According to Mosaic law, anyone who touched a corpse or a bloody body would become ritually impure. How could they minister in the Temple then? Wasn't that their highest priority? If they couldn't carry out their ministry, they risked losing their incomes. Didn't they owe it to their families to walk away?

Jesus had one simple answer: “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37). Follow the example of this “unclean” Samaritan. You might have to risk your comfort or your convenience. You might even risk rejection. But the man suffering before you is your neighbor. He is your brother, and he is worth saving.

Jesus is the ultimate good Samaritan, and we are the victim on the side of the road. He risked everything to save us. By becoming a bloodied, crucified corpse for us, he took on the defilement of our sin and made us clean. And in doing so, he has become “neighbor” to all of us.

May we go and do likewise.

*“Jesus, teach me how to love my neighbor as you love me.”*

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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### Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words of Moses: *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.* Moses continues with these words: *For this command that I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you...No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out.*
  - What message do you think Moses was trying to convey to the people?
  - How do these words apply to us as Christians? How would you characterize how you are fulfilling these words?
  - What small step may God be asking you to take to better love Him and your neighbors?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *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. 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. 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."*
  - Why do you think the psalmist, who is *afflicted and in pain*, is able to respond with these words: *I will praise the name of the Lord in song, and I will glorify him with thanksgiving*?
  - How important to you are these words of the psalmist: *Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live*?
  - How can you better respond to these words in your own times of difficulty?
3. The second reading from the letter to the Colossians is probably an early Christian hymn. It describes Jesus with these words: *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.*
  - In what ways do these words give us a glimpse into Jesus Christ as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity?
  - How have you experienced the truth of these words in your own life?
  - How do the ending words of the reading apply to you, especially those areas requiring you *to reconcile all things for him* and to *making peace by the blood of his cross through him*?
4. The Gospel reading begins with these words: *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?" In response to the man, Jesus tells the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan. The reading ends with these words of Jesus: *Go and do likewise.*
  - Do you agree with the scholar of the law's answer to the question: *what must I do to inherit eternal life*? How does it apply to us as Christians?
  - Which of the characters in the Good Samaritan parable do you relate to the most? Why?
  - In what ways can the parable be considered a model of Jesus' care for each one of us?*
5. The meditation is a reflection on these words from the Gospel reading: *Who is my neighbor* (Luke 10:29)? It ends with these words: *Jesus had one simple answer: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). Follow the example of this "unclean" Samaritan. You might have to risk your comfort or your convenience. You might even risk rejection. But the man suffering before you is your neighbor. He is your brother, and he is worth saving. Jesus is the ultimate good Samaritan, and we are the victim on the side of the road. He risked everything to save us. By becoming a bloodied, crucified corpse for us, he took on the defilement of our sin and made us clean. And in doing so, he has become "neighbor" to all of us. May we go and do likewise.*
  - How do you relate the care given to the man who was victimized with how Jesus has cared for you?
  - What do Jesus' words, *Go and do likewise*, mean when it comes to answering his call to care for others?

**Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace and power to live out the truths of the Gospel, especially to love our neighbor as Jesus has loved us -- and to see the needs of others with Jesus' eyes and his compassion. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.**

***"Jesus, teach me how to love my neighbor as you love me."***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization ([www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partner]