

Father O'Connor's Homily for 13 July 2025  
Fifteenth Ordinary Sunday-C

Deuteronomy 30: 10-14  
Colossians 1: 15-20  
Luke 10: 25-37

Today we hear the parable that Jesus told that we now call "The Good Samaritan." Its title is a popular name for hospitals and nursing homes and healthcare centers. A person who does a good deed for a stranger is often called "a Good Samaritan."

You have heard lots of homilies on the Good Samaritan parable, talking about how the priest and the Levite saw the Jewish man who had been robbed, stripped and beaten, and then went to the other side of the road, avoiding him and "leaving him half-dead." And then how the Samaritan came along, the enemy of that Jewish man, and he showed him neighborly compassion.

We have been warned not to imitate the avoidance of the priest and the Levite, but to follow the kind example of the Good Samaritan. And that explanation is a valid one.

But today I would like to present another interpretation of this parable that can also be found within it, if you look closely.

We begin by looking at the group that heard Jesus tell this parable for the very first time. Who were they, and how did they understand it?

They were Jewish, they were from Galilee, and they were peasants. Unlike us, they would not have identified so much with the priest or the Levite or even with the Good Samaritan – but rather with that poor Jewish victim of the robbers who was left half-dead on the roadside.

Why would they identify with him? Because he was like them. They knew what it was like to travel on that dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. And what happened to that poor man could easily happen to them, or to someone they knew.

They could picture themselves robbed, stripped and beaten and then, opening their eyes, seeing in their enemy's face the merciful face of God.

This parable would have knocked their sandals off. And when Jesus says at the end, "Go and do likewise," He did not mean for them only to imitate the compassion of the Good Samaritan but also to imitate the conversion of the robbers' victim. For if mercy and compassion could come from one's enemy, then no one needs to remain as an enemy. And everyone

could become a neighbor. How? By becoming doers of mercy and compassion across any boundary of pride, prejudice or hatred. This is quite a teaching!

And all this is in answer to the lawyer's original question: "And who is my neighbor?"

I have a story to illustrate this. It is a pretty blunt story, but it makes a strong point. So here it is:

He didn't know how it happened. It had never happened to him before. But there he was, in the third grade, seated at his school desk. And he had just wet his pants. He could hardly breathe, he was so upset.

"When the boys see this, I'll never hear the end of it. And when the girls see this, they're going to talk about me, and I'll be ashamed for the rest of my life!"

And so he bowed his head on his desk and prayed: "Dear Lord, this is an emergency. Please, help me!"

He lifted his head and saw his third grade teacher coming down the aisle. She had that teacher-look in her eyes that said: "I know what's going on here!" He was already so embarrassed.

Then behind his teacher came a classmate, a girl named Susie, and she was carrying a bowl full of water and goldfish.

She was following her teacher, and then the teacher went to step aside to let Susie pass by. And Susie bumps into her teacher's hip and dumps that whole bowl of water and goldfish into his lap.

He pretends to be angry, but inside he's saying, "Thank you, God! Thank you for this miracle!"

What could have been an opportunity for ridicule now became an opportunity for sympathy. His teacher says to him, "Go to your locker and get your gym shorts. Then dry off in the lavatory. You may wear your gym shorts the rest of the day."

While he was out of the room, the class turned on Susie, telling her, "You are such a klutz!"

At the end of the school day he saw Susie waiting for her bus. So he went over to her and whispered, "You did that on purpose, didn't you?" She whispered back, "Yes, I did. I wet my pants in school once too."

He looked at her face – the face of one that he used to think was his enemy. And now he saw that it was the face of his new friend. He said to her with all his heart, "Thank you, Susie! Thank you so much! You saved my life!"

Jesus tells us this now-familiar parable of “The Good Samaritan.” He is asking us to look not only at the compassion of the Good Samaritan, but also at the conversion of the robbers’ victim, who was shocked to see the mercy of God coming to him from someone that he had always thought was his enemy. But that now he could call his neighbor and even his friend.

And the lesson for us? Jesus says: “Go and do likewise.”