

SPIRITUAL LIFE

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Rev. John A. Sistare

It was a hot summer day in 1941 when the alarm sounded throughout a concentration camp in Auschwitz, Poland. One of the prisoners had escaped and, as a result, cell-block 14 was called to stand at attention for three hours. The following day the fugitive still had not been found so they stood in the scorching heat once again. Finally, the Nazi troops decided to enact their policy for escapees. Ten men were chosen from cell-block 14 to die for the one who had escaped. One of these ten began to cry out, "Please, I have a family a wife, children, please not me." At that moment, another man, not from among the ten but from that cell-block, stepped forward. Maximillian Kolbe stepped forward and said, "I want to take this place of this man." At that a Nazi soldier said, "Who is this Polish pig?" Maximillian Kolbe responded, "I am a Polish Catholic priest, I am old and want to take his place." The Nazi soldier conceded and St. Maximillian Kolbe was martyred, killed for the faith.

St. Maximillian Kolbe loved God totally and as a result loved his neighbor. That is the message of the Gospel today. Love of God and love of neighbor! The scholar, a lawyer of Jesus' day, tests Jesus. He asks how he may gain eternal life? Jesus points the finger back at him and challenges him to answer that question himself. The scholar answers correctly, "You shall love God with all your mind, heart, strength, and soul, and neighbor as yourself." Correct, congratulations, you are right! However, the scholar still has another question. "Who is my neighbor?" At that point Jesus answers him as he almost always does, with a story. The story of the good Samaritan shows us that we are called to love God and neighbor.

The Levite and priest loved God. They were known to have worshipped in the temple. However, did they love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength? No way! If they did, they would never have walked by the helpless victim on the side of the road. Thanks be to God there was the Good Samaritan, who loved God and loved neighbor.

Most people in today's society profess to love God. Except for a small group of atheists or some who are mad at God, most will say they love God. "I love God, I love Jesus, oh sure." We even have some in the new age groups who will claim to be gods. Ok, so most love God. However, do we love Him with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves?

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our heart, mind, strength, and soul? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves?

Here comes the problem! Look at modern history alone. We haven't done very well in this area. "Oh sure I love God, but can I own my neighbor?" slavery, racism, prejudice all treat others as less than human, lower than ourselves. "Oh ya, I love God, but can I kill my neighbor." Nazi Germany treating Jewish, Catholics, Christians and anyone else who stood in their way of becoming the super race. Today, are we much better off? No way!

We still have a group of people who are being treated as lower or less than human! The unborn, the most innocent of human beings are being killed in the name of choice and rights. They are being told they aren't persons as slaves, Jewish and many others have been told throughout history. I realize this is a sensitive issue and many may say, "Oh Fr. Sistare, you shouldn't talk about this." Unfortunately, there are priests like the one in our Gospel today, who would rather walk on the other side of the road and neglect the cry of the helpless victim. I am aware that many choose to not speak on this topic, but not here! I and all of you must speak for these innocent children of God! Perhaps I am preaching to the choir, but the choir must go forth and wake up this world! No one has the right to declare that someone else isn't a person because of their sex, race, religion, age or even size!!! We are called to love God totally and love each and every one of our neighbors as ourselves.

Earlier we had the children's Mass and I decided to give them this same message. First I asked them what was inside the womb or belly of a pregnant woman. They responded, "a baby!" Then I asked them, "are there people who are bigger than you? Are there people smarter than you? Are there people who are better basketball, soccer, and football players than you?" They answered, "yes." Then I asked them, "Does that mean that all those people are more important than you?" They responded, "No!" Thanks be to God these children understood this principle! If they can understand this, then all of us as adults and our world should be able to grasp this most basic truth! Can you imagine if every Catholic or Christian understood this principle? We would stop abortion tomorrow!!!

In closing what better way to end than to draw your attention to the Crucifix on the wall. You see, there is the answer to how much Jesus loves us! There is the answer to how many people he loves! Jesus stretched out his arms and said this is how much I love you and this how many people I love. I love them all, each and every one regardless of sex, race, religion, age or size! May we love God with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul and love our neighbor as ourselves. May God Bless you all!

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 10:25-37

July 14, 2013

誰 是 我 的 近 人

吳 智 勳

今天的福音提到慈善撒瑪黎雅人的比喻，這是路加福音所獨有的故事。路加想籍着這比喻讓我們注意法學士問的一個問題：「誰是我的近人？」畢竟這比喻是由此問題引起的。過去有人認為比喻的人物皆有所代表，如慈善的撒瑪黎雅人代表耶穌，傷者代表罪人，司祭與肋未人代表猶太當權者，客棧代表教會，店主代表保祿宗徒。這種解釋不但牽強，而且支離破碎，使人難以把握比喻的信息。

故事很簡單，有人在路上被人打傷了，這在當時是一件相當普遍的事。這人既由耶路撒冷下來，極可能是一個猶太朝聖客。朝聖的人在路上時常遇到強盜，這些強盜很多都是撒瑪黎雅人，因為撒瑪黎雅人很討厭人到耶路撒冷朝聖，他們與猶太人就應在何處朝拜天主爭論不休；歷史上他們亦與猶太人不和，而且發生戰爭。這班強盜打傷了他，洗劫後丟他在路邊。

有三個人經過現場，第一個是司祭，很可能大家心裡立即想到身為司祭，即如今天的神父，應是好心腸的，為甚麼會見死不救？但如果我們設身處地看，這司祭並不是沒有理由的。在聖殿服務的必須遵守聖潔的法律，所有不潔之人，不可在聖殿服務，直至完全潔淨自己為止。再者，聖殿服務是輪班的，相傳那時耶路撒冷及附近的司祭有兩萬人之多，大概要等很久才輪到自己值班。那司祭很害怕碰到這傷者，倘若這傷者後來死去，自己就成為不潔的人，要用七天來潔淨自己，很可能因此錯過了在聖殿服務的機會了。為他來說，為主在聖殿服務是一件神聖的工作，比救人更重要，可能經過一番掙扎後，他最後理性地決定選擇不救人。

第二個路經的是個肋未人，所有司祭都是來自肋未這一支派，他的理由大概一樣，因為他也在聖殿服務，不想碰到死人，失去聖殿服務的救機會。此外，可能這人很謹慎，想到路上不甚太平，他擔心這可能是一個陷阱，假使他停下來，埋伏的同黨便會一擁而上。在這種危險地帶，根本自身難保，何況救人？所以經過一番理性分析後，他也沒有對傷者施以援手便急急走了。

第三個路過的是撒瑪黎雅人，如果是一個猶太的聽眾，一聽到撒瑪黎雅人出現，心裡一定會想到這個傷者真是禍不單行，已經受傷了，又沒有錢，更遇上一個敵人，不知這個撒瑪黎雅人會不會走過去踢他兩腳再走？結果卻完全出乎意料之外，那人動了憐憫的心，沒有用理性去分析是否應該幫助眼前受傷的敵人，幫了以後怎樣向同族人交代？有時我們太理性了，沒有碰到自己的心，理性往往是冷冰冰的，不像憐憫的心那麼容易察覺別人的需要，憐憫心很多時都是善行的好指導。

讓我們回到法學士最初的問題：「誰是我的近人？」為一個猶太人，近人是指與他們同信仰、同種族的猶太人，其他一切都是不潔淨的外邦人。聖經上所謂的愛近人如愛自己，為猶太人來說是愛自己同種族的人如同愛自己一樣。耶穌在比喻裡打破了這個界限，近人是我愛的對象，但不侷限於同信仰和同種族的人，而是泛指一切有需要的人。注意耶穌問法學士的問題：「你認為三個人當中，誰是那個遇到強盜者的近人？」再比較法學士原先的問題：「誰是我的近人？」我們會發覺耶穌不但要求基督徒無分種族與宗教，幫助一切有急需的人，而且更進一步主動地使自己成為別人的近人。

耶穌的問題其實是一份邀請，帶領法學士更上一層樓，可惜法學士理性地知道答案，卻未能觸動憐憫心，他的回答：「是憐憫他的那個人」，正反映出他仍然未能擺脫種族的仇恨，不屑稱呼那撒瑪黎雅人，未能明白耶穌問題中的邀請。耶穌還不灰心，仍充滿希望的鼓勵說：「你也照樣去做吧！」。願我們明白耶穌的苦心，不光是理性的了解，更以憐憫心付諸實行，使自己成為別人的近人。

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