

15thSunday, Ordinary time, Year C
Deut 30:10-14; Col 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37

Jesus tells us today that we must love our neighbors. Our neighbor is anyone, regardless of class, color, race, creed or even gender who needs our help. God wants us to care for one another. We are to measure our kindness and see ourselves as mere custodians of God's treasures. What we are and have are meant to be shared thus fulfilling God's injunction that we become co-creators with him.

Homily

According to a man called Tolstoy, a drama does not tell us the whole of a person's life. What it does is place a person in a situation. Then from the way the person deals with that situation, his or her character is revealed to us. Crisis does not create a character, it merely reveals it. In times of crisis, people reveal what is already inside them, the generous person or the selfish person, the hero or the coward. One moment or an event may force a person to reveal his/her innermost being.

In our Gospel account, Jesus places the Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan in a nicely woven story. These three persons were faced with a decision: to stop and help the wounded man or to continue on about their own business? This encounter was such a moment for them. Their lives were tested. Life is constantly tempting us.

Every day, we are tested in little ways and now and again in big ways. These tests reveal the kind of people we are: we are either fundamentally unselfish like the good Samaritan or we are selfish like the priest and the Levite. Big opportunities are rare and only few people could perform them, but we get many small, less spectacular opportunities to show care and concern for another human being in need. The extent of our virtue lies not in what we do in extraordinary circumstances, but what we do in normal situations and by our ordinary, normal and consistent behaviors. It is our responses to the normal everyday situations that reveal our true characters/personalities.

A true story was told of one American who was touring Alaska in a motor home when his worst fear came through: he broke an axle in the motor-home, and found himself stranded in the middle of nowhere. Leaving his family behind, he decided to walk on in the hope of finding someone who might be able to help him. This incident took place before the advent of mobile phone. After walking for a few miles he came upon a farm house. He told the farmer about his predicament. Without waiting time or words, the farmer dropped his welding equipment and went down with his tractor and towed the motor-home. He

quickly repaired the broken axle, made tea for his guest and wished them well. When he was about to depart, the tourist asked "How much do I owe you?" You don't owe me anything, the farmer replied. I feel I should pay you for your services, the tourist said. You have already paid in full, replied the farmer. How, asked the tourist. By giving me the privilege of your company for a couple of hours. The tourist was stunned but happy for having encountered such an angel of kindness. People like this farmer restore our belief in the goodness of human beings.

Goodness is as much a mystery as evil. However, while evil depresses us, goodness delights and inspires us. The highest state we can attain is when goodness becomes an easy flow of grace, uncalculating and natural. One danger with rich societies is that everyone tends to think that everyone is rich and comfortable and hence no one bothers to find out desperately needy around. People are very comfortable to the extent they become extremely stingy. In rich societies, everyone is presumed rich and happy until they show that they are poor or needy. No one wants to show they are poor so the needy dies unattended and unknown. In poor societies, everyone is presumed poor until and unless they show they are comfortable and rich. People are usually very generous and kind because they think that people are very needy and they wish to lend a helping hand.

A happy life is not achieved overnight. It is not achieved by a few great deeds. It is achieved by long practice. It is achieved by a lot of little deeds. Great things are not done by impulse but a lot of little ones. The most disturbing thing in Jesus' story is not the attack made on an innocent man, but the shocking fact that people you would expect to help him passed by without even showing any compassion. Is it possible that those you would expect to be kind, caring and outreaching could be cold, indifferent and complacent? Thanks to God we are very warm and caring. We are not like the rest of men. Perhaps there is something of the priest's and Levite's attitude or mentality in us. Perhaps there are not. Who knows? What kind of neighbor are we?