

HOMILY for 15th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's Gospel tells us about the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Reflecting on his extraordinary act of kindness, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A farmer in a beat-up old truck was driving to town when he spotted a hitchhiker carrying a heavy backpack & a big suitcase. Being a caring man, the farmer pulled over & asked the young man if he wanted a ride. Even though the truck looked like it was about to fall apart, the young man put his suitcase in the cab & climbed aboard. But, the farmer was confused when he noticed that the man was still wearing the backpack.

"Why don't you take the load off, sonny, & put that pack in the back with your suitcase?" asked the farmer.

"The hiker responded, "That's very kind of you sir, but I wasn't sure if the truck could carry the extra weight, so I thought I'd carry it myself!"

Anyway, last Sunday, Jesus reminded His disciples to rejoice at the end of their missionary journey, not because they were able to succeed over many evil spirits; but because their names were on the list of the chosen ones in Heaven. Surely that is the best reward of the ones who follow Jesus faithfully to the end & carry out His mission of salvation. In this Sunday's Gospel, we learn that a lawyer who wanted a share in that awesome reward & desired to have his name on that list came up to Jesus to inquire Him about it. He asked, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit the everlasting life?" I do not know about you, but I was very surprised to see someone get interested in possessing the eternal life. In fact, I do not recall someone had ever asked Jesus or God the Father in the Bible about the eternal life. Most people only care about this earthly life & how to get more stuffs for it. The last thing they would think about is the eternal life. Hence, this lawyer is very wise with his spiritual foresight & beyond his time.

Jesus certainly did not want to miss out on the opportunity to teach him about the eternal life & show him the way there. He told him that the way to possess the eternal life has to go through their love for God & their neighbors. He assured the lawyer & said, "...Do that, & you shall live." In other words, if anyone follows the Commandments of love, that person would live in God's love all the time & be blessed with the eternal life in the end. But, as you might know, it's always easier said about the Commandment of love than getting it done. In fact, I recall asking the children at a school Mass once if they thought that loving God would be more difficult than loving their neighbors. The children told me that it would be more difficult for people to love their neighbors than to love God. At first, I was shocked to hear that. But, I thought it over & realized that the children told me the truth. They spoke from their life experience as they had to get along with their siblings & friends. Those neighbors could make them mad & drive them crazy at times while God usually does not do that. That is why I'm not surprised to see the lawyer get hung off on the same thing in today's Gospel, namely, loving his neighbors. Jesus had to help him understand how he could do that & whom his neighbors would be with the help of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

As I have shared with you before, the Jews defined neighbors to be Jewish people only. They simply ignored & had nothing to do with other ethnicities such as the Samaritans, the Canaanites, & so on. Doesn't that sound like what happening in our country & many European countries these days? Some folks simply look down on certain ethnicities nowadays & shun them like leprosy because of their skin colors, economical status, or other reasons. Jesus tried

to put an end to their narrow-mindedness & change their discriminating hearts by telling them the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He ended it by asking, "Which of those three (passersby), in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The lawyer answered, "The one who treated him with compassion." Jesus told him, "Then, go & do the same." I believe that this Sunday Jesus tells us, especially our political leaders, the same parable & commands everyone to treat people around them with compassion. That is why I'm shocked & awestruck to see that many Christians these days, especially Christian politicians, would treat people that they do not like or fit in with their political viewpoints worse than dirt. They have no compassion for those poor folks & have no hesitation to kick them to the curbs & destroy them. Believe it or not, these Christians are the ones who claim that they are pro-life & against abortion. How could these Christians claim that everyone should protect a fetus in the womb while they themselves would treat a real human being of another race like trash? These folks are not real Christians because they do not follow the Commandment of loving their neighbors as Jesus told them to do.

In case those fake Christians have any doubt about that Commandment, today's First Reading has this message for them, "...For this Commandment which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious & remote for you. It is not up in the sky... No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths & in your hearts; you have only to carry it out." In other words, those fake Christians have already known the Commandment of loving their neighbors that Jesus had set in their hearts. All they have to do is to carry/live it out. Unfortunately, they have let their political agenda & other worldly things take over their hearts & make them ignore that Commandment or try to explain it away with their political rhetoric. We should point out their wrongdoing & avoid making the same mistake ourselves.

Again, in case those fake Christians still claim that they believe in God or somehow act contrary to God's Commandments of love, today's Second Reading reminds them with the following message, "Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In Him, everything in Heaven & on earth was created... It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in Him &, by means of Him, to reconcile everything in His person, everything both on earth & in the Heavens, making peace through the blood of His Cross." So, if they believe in God, they got to see the image of God in Jesus Christ & other human beings. They must treat everyone with love & respect as they do to God. Otherwise, they just claim to be a believer; but their actions do not seem to match it.

My dear brothers & sisters, how badly do you like to possess the eternal life? Which Commandment of love do you have a tough time to carry out – loving God or loving your neighbors? And whom do you consider to be your neighbors? I hope that we will always try to treat everyone around us with compassion like the Good Samaritan did to the victim of a robbery. That way we could bring God's love & blessings to everyone around us regardless of their ethnicities, economic & political status, or gender. Then, on the Last day, our Lord Jesus will judge us mercifully & reward us abundantly in His Kingdom.