

Homily: 15th Sunday Cycle C: 2016: Deut 30: 10-14; Ps. 69; Col 1:15-20; Lk 10:25-37

“The Call to Live a Life of Christian Charity”

1. The parable of the Good Samaritan today gives us a model of Christian love.

Christian love is different than simply being nice or being a humanitarian or a philanthropist. The key is our motivation: we Christians are not to love our neighbor simply to make ourselves feel good or to help them just on a human level, but the core reason why are called by God to help and love others is because they are made in the image of God and we want to imitate Jesus in His self-giving love.

2. To be a person of mercy or compassion is more than “feeling someone’s

pain,” for we never really can fully do that - contrary to what some politicians say - as every human person and situation is multi-layered and complicated. True mercy rather consists of doing deeds of love, in our will and actions - if the feelings of compassion are there that is a bonus since our feelings are very up and down because our human nature is wounded because of sin - but don’t ever let your lack of loving feelings toward a person prevent you from loving them in God. The old saying is “actions speak louder than words.” There are so many ways we are called to be like the Good Samaritan in the Gospel reading who represents God, e.g., *when a mother or father gets up in the middle of the night to care for a little baby; caring for an elderly parent; loving our spouse in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, in the beauty of youth and in the challenges as we get older; being patient with someone who we really don’t like, or listening to someone we don’t find very interesting; calling or visiting a lonely person, whether they are at home or in the hospital or nursing home; using our cell phone to call for help when we see someone broken down along the road, etc..* In big or small ways, we are called to do daily deeds of self-giving love for our neighbor, especially when we don’t feel like it on a human level! That is the true test of charity and whether or not we are growing in the likeness of Christ, i.e., holiness.

3. **It is only if we are rooted in the Lord that we can continue to love others long term.** As I have mentioned before in homilies, Blessed Mother Teresa pointed out that she was only able to love the other, in her case in a very heroic way, because she spent at least two hours a day in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and He filled up her soul with HIS LOVE to love the least among us. What a powerful witness of the necessity of a deep interior life of prayer! Not all of us can spend two or more hours in prayer each day like a religious sister, but all of us can pray more and work on our personal relationship Jesus leading to deeper union with the entire Blessed Trinity. **Christ's love is the inspiration for everything we do as a Church:** our missionary activity, hospitals, nursing homes, day cares, schools, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, pro-life work, etc. All this we do because we want to imitate our Heavenly Father's all encompassing love shown to us in a concrete way in the person of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Blessed Mother Teresa also said, *"Simple acts of love and care keep the light of Christ burning in our world. Sometimes it is simply a kind word, a compliment, a smile, a thank you. Each work of love however big or small brings a person face to face with God."* True Christian love heals, transforms, liberates and transforms our hearts, and one person at a time brings souls to Christ who alone is our salvation. How we need this self-giving love today in world filled with ever increasing violence and hate! Let us be like the Good Samaritan making the time to help those in need, and be not like the priest or Levite in the parable - too busy to love the other! Instead in Christ may we love in season and out of season, which is the narrow path to Heaven, to His Kingdom the life of which is based on self-giving love in all its manifold and beautiful forms beyond our human imagining. God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

Pope Benedict XVI. Encyclical Letter **On Christian Charity** (Deus Caritas Est).
December 25, 2005. See:

www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben