

15th Sunday in the Ordinary Time (C)
What We Must Be with Our Lord Jesus

Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Psalm 19:8,9,10,11; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

"Who is my neighbor?" We hear this curious question from a scholar of the law (Lk. 10:29). Our Lord Jesus answered it through the parable of the Good Samaritan, which leads our minds to reflect on the practical implications of our confession that we love God with all our hearts, minds and souls.

Last Sunday, we reflected on the seemingly ordinary questions: How are you? Where are you? And who are you? These questions take on a deeper meaning when viewed through the lens of faith. They are not just about our physical state or location, but about our spiritual journey as pilgrims of hope, our relationship with God, and our identity as His children.

How are you? We respond, "I am blessed," because we live by the grace of God and not by good luck and bad luck. Where are you? We say, "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will," because we don't just believe in God, we obey. And who are you? We say, "I am a child of God." We claim and proclaim the truth of who we are and how we become through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Who and how we are with the Lord Jesus is the good news we are joyfully grateful to proclaim!

The parable of the Good Samaritan deepens our understanding of who and how we are with the Lord. It expands our awareness and knowledge that neighbors are not defined by boundaries but by those in need. We can pause for a moment and identify our neighbors—those who need most to be loved and cared for, particularly those who are victims of sad and unfortunate circumstances in life.

The many social outreach programs in our parish, including the Senior Food Bank, Ohana Fresh Produce, outreach to Kakaako IHS shelter, outreach for poor and in-need families, Seafarer Ministry, and other social outreach programs of our diocese, are profoundly beautiful expressions of our understanding of neighbor. On the other hand, when we are all in danger of losing everything, we feel how important we are to each other. For example, the "go fund" initiative to help the woman who died because of a fire in Waianae, the wildfire in Lahaina, Maui, and the deadly floods in Texas last week. We hope that it doesn't take a tragedy for us to feel how much we belong to each other.

The truth of being a neighbor and how we are bound together should not be a surprising pronouncement. It is written in our DNA when God created us, but was blurred because of pride, selfishness, and other forms of vices.

Our first reading, from the book of Deuteronomy, insists that God's law is not alien or remote from us. Instead, God's law flows from our shared experience of human life. It is found in our hearts, and we only need to act on it (cf. Deut. 30:11-14). It may seem in our world today that people are behaving like individual atoms struggling to survive, but the reality is we are all one human pilgrim family, intricately connected, both trying and striving together to appreciate the dignity and mystery of life. The parable of the Good Samaritan talks about this truth, the value of each one of us in the eyes of God. Our Lord Jesus points out precisely that value, and it should be part of our conversations in life. If love of God is fundamental to our faith, then the love of neighbor is equally essential. That is to say, the very love that binds us to God is the same love that should bind us to every person who is loved by God as well.

We do this not by our power alone. We will never learn how to love unless we first learn how to receive love and to know that genuine love is freely given. This is the love shown by our Lord Jesus to each one of us. Hence, the

parable of a Good Samaritan could also be that the Good Samaritan is Jesus himself, and the victim is the human race; in one way or another, each of us experiences being robbed of our life and dignity. Our Lord Jesus has taken care of us; he reconciles us to God through his sacrifice on the Cross; he gathers us into his church, our place of refuge; he nourishes and sustains us through the Holy Sacraments, primarily the Holy Eucharist. Now we, in turn, are called to be and do what he is and what he does (cf. Lk. 10:37).

The scholar of law may have asked the wrong question. Instead of asking, "What must I do?" He should have asked, "What must I be?"

As pilgrims of hope, let us prayerfully consider that Lord Jesus is telling us this weekend "what we must be." When we humbly receive His love, we learn to be good neighbors and champions for those facing hardships. The call to love is not burdensome; it becomes a source of joy and fulfillment. St. Paul embodies this by declaring, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

May God bless and strengthen what we must be in the name of Jesus!

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