

5th October, Monday week 27 in ordinary time

Luke 10:25-37

The wonderful thing about Sacred Scriptures is that however familiar it is; there is always something new for us to reflect upon. A dear departed priest of this diocese (Mgr. Paul Watson) taught us to look for signs of the sacraments in the New Testament, especially the Gospels. References to “oil” and “wine” should make us sit up, he said.

The parable is in response to the question “who is my neighbour” (Lk. 10:29), which comes after a discussion on inheriting Eternal Life (v.25). At the end, the lawyer had to agree that the rejected despised person (the Samaritan) was the one who was neighbour to the traveller. How does this relate to the sacraments? If we remember that the sacraments give us life and grace we can see that the Samaritan poured oil (used in many sacraments including the anointing of the sick) and wine (indicative of the Eucharist which unites us more profoundly to Christ) and these were used to heal the broken man. The Samaritan took the man on his own mount to the refuge of an inn (the Church?) and then paid all that was necessary for his care and restoration (Christ paid all that was necessary for our salvation).

Added to this, are the geographical and historical facts which can escape us. Jerusalem was the place where God resided in His temple. To be leaving Jerusalem and going “down” (literally as Jerusalem was on a hill) to Jericho was a symbol of turning one’s back on God, on true life.

So the man was turning away from the source of life, was beaten up and left for dead, but his rescuer came in the guise of a rejected stranger who bound him, gave him what was necessary, not just to exist, but to be fully restored.

Jesus Christ is the rejected one, who was despised and hated by the pharisees and so called “educated” class. Yet, he comes to pick us up when we are down, even if we are turning away from Him. He binds our wounds and restores us with the sacraments of the Church, and leads us back to the fulness of life, paying everything that is needed. Jesus Christ is the one who truly leads us to Eternal Life, to the bosom of the Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

And the question to the lawyer? Who was the neighbour? Christ is our neighbour. The final command; “Go and do likewise” (v.37) means that having been rescued by Jesus Christ who picks us up and restores us to health, He commands that we do the same for other people. Only we don’t do it alone; united to Him by our Baptism and fed through the Eucharist we have received the grace to respond with His love to all who need our neighbourly care.

Carol Ann Harnett

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