



15th SUNDAY of ORDINARY TIME ***YEAR C – July 14, 2019***

Catherine Booth, the co-founder of the Salvation Army, was an excellent, electrifying preacher. Wherever she went, great crowds of people came to hear her message of hope: princes and nobles, beggars and the homeless, rich and poor, everyone was welcome.

Father Mark Link tells an interesting story. One night, after preaching in a large city, a certain well-placed lady invited Mrs. Booth to dinner. The lady's words of welcome as she arrived were: "My dear Mrs. Booth, that meeting today was dreadful." Mrs. Booth said, "Why would you say that." "Well, she said, while you were speaking, I was looking at those people sitting next to me and all around me. Their faces were so terrible, many of them had not bathed for days. It was disgusting.

Mrs. Booth said to her, do you know who they are. Certainly not was the reply. I don't travel in those circles. Mrs. Booth looked at her with great kindness and said, "They did not come with me from England, they are your neighbors."

The Golden Rule exemplified by the Samaritan in the Gospel today is not just a Christian thing. Every religion and culture in the world has a Golden Rule in one form or another.

Here are just a few samples:

Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the law: all the rest is commentary."

Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Confucianism: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you."

Catholicism: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

If the Golden Rule was so well-known in ancient cultures why did Jesus spend so much time talking about it as if it was something new? For him, it is something new. The new thing in his insistence that ALL humanity is one big neighborhood. There are no boundaries. It's not us and them, it's just us. Every man is our brother and every woman is our sister. Other religions are restricted to the boundaries of that religion. The teaching of Jesus knows no boundaries.

Jesus is not against border walls that protect the sovereignty of a nation. You will recall, there is a wall around the Vatican. He is against the walls of division, prejudice and suspicion that humans have erected between "us" and "them." Those walls must come down.

So, to the question in the Bible today, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus says, "Anyone who needs your help when you are able to help – even if they're not of your religion or part of your inner circle of friends." That person in need is your neighbor. When you are in the presence of a person like that, you will know it and only you can decide what you will do.

For a few moments in prayerful silence consider this, "Do you know a person that?" If the answer is yes, what will you do?"

