

Fifteenth Sunday Ordinary Time– Cycle C

July 14, 2019

Christ the Good Shepherd, ORCC

Reflection by Father Charles Blanchard

First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14
Psalm 68(69):14,17,30-31,33-34,36-37
Second Reading: Colossians 1:15-20
Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

Welcome to Christ the Good Shepherd! To our enduring parishioners and new found-friends, you are welcome to hear God's word and be nourished at this Table where there is no partiality.

You and I have met the lawyer in today's Gospel many times; sadly, sometimes, it's been when looking in the mirror.

To test Jesus, he asked, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus, as he does so often, answers with a question (*i.e., a socratic approach*): **"What is written in the law?"**

The lawyer answers with the same answer that Jesus used when he was asked what the greatest commandment is: love God and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Then, Jesus tells him precisely what to do; **"Do this [love] and you will live.**

The lawyer had asked a **"do to get something"** question; Jesus corrected with a **"do to live"** answer.

The lawyer, in legal fashion, then asked that "neighbor" be defined: **"Who is my neighbor?"**

Perhaps, he did not want to make the mistake of offering his charity unnecessarily.

My sisters and brothers, today's Gospel reading highlights That the lawyer is more interested in the law than love of his neighbor.

Jesus answered with the **trick of threes** – as, “there was a rabbi, a minister, and a priest” – or “there was a Polish man, an Italian, and an Irishman.” The third mentioned is either the punch line of a joke or the successful solution to an issue.

Jesus' story in which a Samaritan was the hero, the one who possessed the compassion of God over a law-abiding priest and a Levite would have been a severe shock to any Jew at that time.

Jesus was saying that this lawyer and his fellow Jews could not hide behind their laws or culture. This is so true as laws give structure to our lives; some sense of stability; and few would prefer to live without them.

Jesus broke laws to help people, demonstrating beyond doubt that **compassion trumps law**.

Neither the Jews, then, nor ourselves, now, can decide who is our neighbor. In the kingdom of God, boundaries defining neighbors do not exist. Compassion trumps law.

There is a second, subtler, more personal lesson to be learned – one that surely impacts me. It is provoked by the closing words of Jesus, “Go and do likewise.”

If there is any verse in all of revelation that stands out for me, it is Jesus' answer to the question: “What is the greatest commandment?”

My sisters and brothers, it has been drummed into us all for years.

But, the question becomes: **Why is the follow-through not in the forefront of my consciousness?** Perhaps, you and I feel a need to “go and do likewise” in a more pro-active way.

Theology may help here. Theology talks about **cognitive knowing** and **evaluative knowing**.

- ✓ Some people intellectually know that murder is wrong, but fail to appreciate its wrongness;
- ✓ Perhaps, we intellectually know that love of god and neighbor should be paramount in our lived lives, but somehow we fail to appreciate that spiritual truth 24/7 and thereby fail to apply the knowledge in the here and now situation;
- ✓ Like the gospel lawyer who knew the greatest commandment, you and I also begin to ponder it and do not, as some would say, “Just do it.”

My sisters and brothers, if we do not work on our faith convictions, our faith-convictions will not work for us in crunch times. The disconnect indicates a degree of lack of integrity.

The Good Samaritan was “good,” because he saw a need. His gut was struck. He reacted - positively. The story does not speak of any debate in his mind, weighing pros and cons. He was somehow “**compassion-ready**” for this moment.

My hope and prayer is to increase spontaneity in **compassion situations** so as to better model the compassion about which Jesus spoke.

To our credit, you and I have promptly reacted in critical situations in the past (e.g., *September 20, 2017 Hurricane Maria Puerto Rico Response; Christ the Good Shepherd, ORCC Berkley relocation; & Parish Standing Committee Volunteers*).

However, today’s Gospel requires our thoughtful consideration for “**compassion knee-jerk**” responses.

Perhaps, you and I can identify with this. We, perhaps, need to be conscious of a possible disconnect -- or slow-connect -- **between knowing about compassion and showing compassion** whereby, you and I consistently identify with the compassion of god; where you and I consistently step up to the plate, **in the here and now** living our Christian vocation.

May our collective prayer be “God every faithful and true, give us the courage to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly and to live Jesus more compassionately at a gut level so that you and I DO TO LIVE ANEW today, tomorrow and beyond!”

Gracias de Dios para todos!

May God’s Peace and Love be with all of you!