

## Commentary to the Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)



Usually when we hear the parable of the Good Samaritan the priest will note in his homily that those who passed up the poor man, the priest and the Levite, were part of the Temple ritual and should not be confused with Catholic priests or Church workers. I'm not so sure. Yes, the priest and Levite of the parable had to avoid ritual impurity and would not have been able to serve their function in the Temple if they had touched a dead or diseased person. But I am not so sure that the parable couldn't be pointed to all of us, priests and Church workers included. With the growth of the people in the faith and the shortage of priests, we priests are busier than ever. But are we too busy to be compassionate?

When a person comes to the office crying, when a wife calls to ask if someone could see her husband before he dies, when a young couple need to deal with a crisis, a priest has to forgo his schedule, or make an appropriate accommodation, and show compassion for those who are hurting. All Church workers as well as those who teach in our schools and childhood centers need to do the same. If we don't, and when we don't, then we become so busy doing our work that we miss the Lord reaching out to us. "But, I'm doing the Lord's work," we might protest, and we do so protest. Then we are confronted with this rhetorical question: "How can you be doing the Lord's work if you are missing the presence of the Lord reaching out for help?" It is the same for all Christians. We cannot claim that we are doing something good if the major action of our Christianity is mere attendance in Church. Recently I was speaking with a young Mom who got herself into a bit of a predicament marriage wise.

Actually, it was the lack of the marriage that made the predicament. She was in my office with her fiancé as we were getting things straightened out for them both. (As an aside, let me say that I often mention to people that our lives would be wonderful if we went in a straight line from the starting line to the finish line, but sadly none of us do. What is important is that we find ways to get to that finish line.) Anyway, so you can see I had two good people in my office who were not in a proper relationship but who were working on it. Back to the story, the girl told me about a friend of hers who

was killed and how she and her fiancé were spending all sorts of time with the friend's family as well as writing them, sending them notes encouraging them to keep the faith and to know that God was with them. I said to myself, "Now this is a good Christian and a Good Samaritan." She may not be seen by some to be in the mainstream of religious life like the Samaritan of the parable, but she knows what she needs to do to be a Christian. She needs to be compassionate. Good Christian husbands, when your wives are having a down day, or are in a funk, perhaps feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated, be good Christians and good Catholics and drop whatever you are doing to just be with her. Don't be concerned like most men with accomplishing something, or even with solving her problems. You can't. Just be present for her and with her, even if you do nothing more than chat.

That is being compassionate. That is being a Good Samaritan. Good Christian wives, when your husband is so concerned over providing better for the family, and is full of anxiety wondering how you are going to pay for your ordinary expenses, let alone the kids' college and your own futures, just let him know that you and he will always be together, you will always have love and God will take care of the rest. All of us men have a lot of little boy in us that needs to hear someone we love tell us everything is going to be OK. That is how you ladies can be Good Samaritans. Good Christian parents, stop being so concerned with filling your children's schedule and be more concerned with being physically present to hear their needs when they express them. Maybe the folks next door have their kids in every activity possible. If that works for them, great. But being a Good Samaritan for your own children is being available to be compassionate for them.

Good Christian children and Teens, your Mom and Dad love you, but they are not perfect. Like you, God is still working on them. He's basically working on them through you teaching them new levels of patience and understanding. Even still, the worse thing that bothers your parents is when they think they have not been as good of parents as they could have been. When you know they feel bad about how they reacted to something you said or did, how about letting it go and give them a hug or kiss? Better yet, how about not provoking them and do your part in the family—chores, etc. Good Christians, all of us, we need to stop trying to "schedule Jesus". Jesus is not on our schedule. We are on His schedule. And He is on the schedule of those who need us to show compassion. Pray, all of us, that we don't overlook His presence when He reaches out to us in those who need our love, our charity.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino, SJ