

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

[Reading I: Deuteronomy 30:10-14](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37](#)

[or Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11](#)

[Reading II: Colossians 1:15-20](#)

[Gospel: Luke 10:25-37](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/071022.cfm#main-content>



Van Gogh, The Good Samaritan, 1849

A scholar of the Law questions Jesus. Jesus returns a question to him, who then quotes what Jesus has taught in other places. Jesus embarrasses the scholar by having him answer his own question. The scholar's reason for asking is the key to understanding the parable that Jesus teaches. "Wishing to justify himself." The scholar's focus is on making himself look good.

The cultural understanding of neighbor in ancient times was someone of an identifiable group, whether the family, clan, or other relationship. Neighbor pinpoints who has a demand on you and whom you can neglect. Jesus does not answer but tells a parable. He is not going to debate the degree of the relationship. He wants to present a whole new perspective.

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was a desolate place where robbery often occurred. The man was robbed, stripped, and left for dead. The priest and the levite passed him. The original audience would have understood. If someone comes within four cubits (about six feet) of a corpse, one would be ritually unclean and could not function in the temple rituals. The priest and levite were playing it safe and following procedure. The Samaritan was an outcast. The Jewish people hated the Samaritans for intermarrying with Gentiles. For us, a terrorist could be the one who stops to help. It is the Samaritan who acts to care for the man and does not consider what the cost may be.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it this way: *"Neighborliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. We have literally no time to sit down and ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbor or not. We must get into action and obey; we must behave like a neighbor to him"* (D. Bonhoeffer, [The Cost of Discipleship](#)).

The Book of Deuteronomy addresses the ongoing question of disciples. What does God want a person to do? If only it were in black and white, then I would do it. Deuteronomy emphasizes that God's law is not a mystery that must be decoded or analyzed. It is clear and simple. One does not need to go searching for it. God has placed it in human hearts. St Paul refers to this text in teaching that the Gospel is written in one's heart.

Listening is the key. God is at work in each person's life, offering relationship, healing, and life. St Ignatius invited people to pause each day and look back over the day. What were the moments of life, gratitude, and connectedness with self and others? These are the work of God. What have been the moments of disconnectedness, selfishness, or lack of gratitude? These are the moments where growth and healing are possible. Be attentive to what is going on within you. It is where you will encounter God in your life today.

The second reading begins a new letter in the New Testament, the Letter to the Colossians. The passage presented today is a Christological hymn with two parts. The first part utilizes the wisdom tradition of Judaism in connecting Christ to creation and the second part reflects on redemption.

All things were created in and through Jesus, who was the first expression of God as the Word. He holds all things together. As the first, he is also head of the Church and the first born of the new creation in his resurrection. The same God created everything through Jesus and redeemed everything through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Contrary to other religious traditions, the created world is not ultimately bad. It was made by God, who pronounced all that was created as very good. Creation has been misused and abused and, like the human heart, awaits God continuing action to restore it. As a work of God, one can find and draw close to God in nature and all the beauty that God has created.

Reflection Questions:

Who are some people whom you find difficult to see as your neighbor?

What fears arise for you when you see someone who appears to be in need?

How do you seek to understand God's call in your life?

In viewing all creation as the work of Jesus, how are you called to value and honor the created world?

Themes

Works of Mercy

Priority of Love over religious obligations

The value and dignity of creation

The Examen of Consciousness – St Ignatius

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that our deeds of compassion and loving service may be signs of God's presence and action in the world

For openness of heart: that we may allow the pain and suffering of others to move our hearts and spirits to a loving response

For all who have been the victims of crime: that God will restore their loss, heal their wounds, and help them to trust others again

For healing of racism: that we may be instruments of reconciliation, working for justice, and promoting the advancement of all who have suffered prejudice or discrimination

For better stewardship of God's creation: that being aware that all creation came through Christ, we may work to honor and protect it as a sign of God's love for all people