

OCTOBER 7, 2019 Monday of the 27th Week of Ordinary Time

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

Jon 1:1-2:2,11

Jon 2:3-5,8

Lk 10:25-37

Luke presents this parable within the context of a larger episode, in which Jesus encounters a lawyer who believes he can put him to the test. Jesus has already been tested at the beginning of his public ministry, when he was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert and tempted by the devil. Three times in the course of this temptation (see Lk 4:2,12,13), the devil pushed Jesus to prove that he really was the Son of God and to see whether he would remain faithful to the will of God. In the third “test,” Jesus turned away the devil, uttering the last words of his battle with Satan: “You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test” (Lk 4:12).

Now the Gospel passage from Luke states, “There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test Jesus” (Lk 10:25). So the attentive reader who has seen Jesus prove himself to be truly the Son of God knows that the scholar of the law is trying to do something that even the devil failed to do and that Jesus has explicitly forbidden; it is much more likely that it is the scholar who will find himself tested.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is famous and easy to imagine, but today’s Gospel begins with the announcement that a scholar of the law is approaching to put Jesus to the test. There are many experts in the science of happiness in our world who try to test today’s apostles of the Gospel. What must we do to have eternal life? How can we achieve happiness? Our answer must be nothing other than the teaching of the Master. To achieve happiness, we must love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our spirit, and love our neighbour as ourselves. Love God and neighbour. Love God through others. Love the neighbour as God wants! But how to do it, concretely?

Jesus gives us an example through the story of the good Samaritan. Luke is the only evangelist to pass on this extraordinary story from the teaching of Jesus. “A man ... went down from Jerusalem to Jericho”: that is, he left the sphere of the

temple, of the sacred, of the holy city, and headed for the periphery, towards the “bottom” of the earth. Jericho, not far from the Dead Sea, was in fact one of the humblest cities in the world. The man leaves the mountain of Zion to descend into the abyss, a place of worldly insecurity and chaos. And predictably, he falls into the hands of robbers. It is exactly the situation of the contemporary person who no longer believes, who deserts the sacred to sink day after day into the depths of uncertainty and finitude. And there are thieves along the way who rob him of everything, leaving him stunned, alone, and abandoned. Unfortunately, a priest coming down the path passes by the dying man and continues on. Then a Levite comes by, sees the man, and goes on. The text does not tell us his place of origin; like the priest, he lacks a heart for the dying man. “But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him” (Lk 10:33-34). The Samaritan delays his journey to take care of a stranger, his own brother in humanity. Jesus did the same, in a sublime way, through his redemptive death. He washed us in the blood and water that flowed from his open side on the Cross. The next day, the Samaritan provided the innkeeper two silver coins, asking him to take care of the patient. Jesus paid on the cross the price of our healing, our redemption. He is ready to repay all the debts we incur by our daily sins. Of the three, the neighbour of the one who fell into the hands of the robbers is the Samaritan who had compassion on him.

What does this have to teach us who are called to mission? Only love evangelizes effectively. It is not a matter of developing a religion of worship, of morality, of legalistic prescriptions; it is a matter of making neighbours of Christ the wounded women and men that we meet on our roads to Jericho. It is a question of making sure that our meticulously planned programs give priority to caring for the wounded we encounter on our roads. It is about giving first aid with what we have: the oil of mercy and the wine of love. It is about bringing humanity ever closer to God’s saving goodness through faith in Christ. It is faith in him who died and rose again that familiarizes us more and more with God’s ways of working, with its criteria of salvation. The Samaritan is good not by himself; he is good because he thinks and acts as Jesus would have done in that situation. He is good thanks to the goodness of God whom we can receive and communicate through faith.