

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
(Deuteronomy 30:10-14 / Luke 10:25-37)  
10.07.2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

The parable of the Good Samaritan invites us to undertake the longest journey we shall ever make in our whole lifetime and which will end only a few moments after our death. It is **the journey from our head (our mind) to our heart**. We are 'cerebral' people called to become loving, merciful and compassionate people: men and women of the heart.

Let us read today's gospel parable from this perspective. On the roadside, on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, there lay a dying man, whom robbers had attacked, stripped and abandoned. It happened that a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan were travelling along that same road. Priest and Levite were, so to speak, members of the clergy of the Temple at Jerusalem, that is to say spiritual authorities for the people. The Samaritan was a schismatic Jew, considered to be a stranger and an impure pagan. The Law of the Lord imposed on the passer-by the duty to assist a wounded man in this kind of situation, but both priest and Levite passed by without stopping. They were in a hurry! Probably, the priest looked at his watch and said: 'I am late for the board of governors and I am the chairman. I can't miss that meeting. Or if he was pious: 'I am going to say Mass... I can't be late'. The Levite may have said: 'I don't know if the Law permits me to stop because there is blood there and through contact with that blood I will become impure. In any case, they both crossed the road and took another path to avoid approaching the wounded man. They saw him with the eyes of their heads but ignored him at the level of the heart. They looked at him but did not really see him or they would have offered him help.

When the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he did not pass by as the priest and the Levite had done. No doubt this Samaritan also had his own commitments to fulfil and things to do; he was surely in a hurry too. But when he saw the dying man lying by the roadside, his heart and his emotions were moved. Suddenly he was filled with compassion, that is to say, the suffering of the wounded man became his own suffering. This is the meaning of the word com-*passion*: to suffer with. The Samaritan was not only 'moved' by mercy and compassion; but he went on to 'act' mercifully and compassionately in regard to the wounded man, taking care of him and even paying for further treatment for him. All this teaches us that love and compassion are far from being only vague sentiments or superficial feelings. They are exacting ways of life.

The Priest and the Levite acted with their heads; they saw the wounded man but their hearts remained closed, cold. The Samaritan saw the wounded man with the eyes of his heart. He was filled with compassion for him and came to his help. In showing mercy to the wounded man, the Samaritan acted in the way God acts with each one of us. The Lord is always ready to come to our help, He is always ready to show us mercy and compassion, He is always ready to forgive us, He is always ready to set us free from guilt, shame and fear of death. In other words, in showing mercy to the wounded man, the Samaritan became for this man a living icon of our loving God.

Our spiritual journey leads us to move from our head, our mind, our brain – choose the word you want – it leads us to descend to the level of our heart, the inner core of our being which is inhabited by the bowels of mercy that the Lord has given to us. An authentic spiritual

journey leads us to stop acting as the Priest and the Levite did, in order to begin acting in the way the Samaritan did. We can know a lot of things about God (with our head) without knowing God himself (with our heart). We can know the Bible from Genesis to Apocalypse, we may have read a lot of commentaries on the Scriptures, we may have studied theology and have graduated with first class honours and yet not know God. Since God is love, not to know Him is to be without love. The call addressed to us is a call to love God and our neighbour. The priest and the Levite knew a lot of things about God, but did not really know God. In their mind, they knew that God was mercy, but they were unable to manifest love and show mercy to their neighbour in his need.

A relevant question for us today is this: Just where do we live? Do we live in our head or do we live in our heart? From what level do we relate to others? Do we relate from our head or from our heart? We are called to relate to others from our hearts; we are called to be merciful and compassionate in others' regard: to rejoice with those who rejoice, to suffer with those who suffer, to cry with those who cry.

To journey from our head to our heart does not mean that we have to forget our head altogether. It means that we have to hold both our head and our heart together. To succeed in this respect, we need help; we need the help of divine Wisdom. Wisdom is the mediation between God and man. "Wisdom delights in God's presence and with the children of men", to quote the Book of Proverbs. Christ, God and man, is the Wisdom of God. Wisdom is what can help us to hold together the different dimensions of the human person we are. With the help of Wisdom, our heart softens our mind and our mind enlightens our heart. Our tendency is to live with our head only or with our heart alone. Under the guidance of Wisdom, we learn how to live with both our head and our heart.

There are so many wounded men and women today; often they are very near to us. How can we fail to recognize them in a very special way in the refugees who flee their countries and try to enter into Europe in order to rebuild their lives?

Europe is called to welcome them with mercy and thoughtfulness. That is a duty. We have to welcome them with our hearts, with love, but, at the same time, we have to ask ourselves why they are fleeing their countries? Is there a way to avoid them having to flee their homeland? What can we do to help people of different religions, of different cultures to live together, in mutual respect? What can we do to help create a better future for these migrants in their own land? We have to welcome migrants with a merciful heart, with charity, but keeping in sight the full picture of their situation: remembering that they have the right to live in their own land. It would be much better for them to live deeply rooted among their own people. If we want to be able to hold together mercy and truthfulness, then we need the help of divine Wisdom.

May the Lord give us a heart like that of the Samaritan! May He teach us to relate to others with love and discernment!