

# THE GOOD SAMARITAN AND THE GOOD CATHOLIC

by Rev. Clarence Kelly

The parable of the good Samaritan, which the Church gives us to read toward the end of the summer, teaches us a double lesson. The first and obvious lesson is that we must love our neighbor. The second lesson, which is not quite so obvious, is the lesson of God's love for us. Thus the saints tell us that as the Samaritan treated the stranger Our Lord treated mankind.

Let us then consider the details of the parable: A certain man made the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. Along the way he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him. They wounded him and they left him half dead.

As he lay dying by the side of the road, a priest came by. Seeing this poor man, he passed by and did not lift a finger to help him. Then came a Levite. He also passed by and offered no help.

Finally, a Samaritan came by -- one of the wounded man's inveterate enemies. The Samaritans disliked the Jews. But the Jews actually despised and detested the Samaritans. Even "hate" would not be too strong a word to describe the attitude of certain Jews toward the Samaritans. And this Samaritan, seeing the poor man naked, wounded and close to death, did everything in his power to help him.

Unlike the priest and the Levite, he was moved with compassion. He cleaned his wounds, anointed them and bandaged them. He covered the victim and put him upon his own beast. And he took him to inn. He cared for him throughout the night. In the morning when it came time for him to leave, the Samaritan commissioned the innkeeper to care for him. He gave him two coins and told him that whatever else he would have to do he

would pay him for it on his return -- a sort of blank-check promise for the sake of this fallen enemy!.

Now Our Lord's meaning in the parable.

The man who was stripped, beaten and robbed represents the human race. The robbers represent the devil and his angels. The priest and the Levite represent the Old Law. The Samaritan is Christ. The going up to the wounded man, the pouring on oil and wine, the binding of the wounds, the caring for the man throughout the night -- these things represent the redemptive work of Christ. They represent the Incarnation whereby God became a man to rescue us from the clutches of the devil.

The oil and the wine represent the Sacraments. The coins, among other things, represent the merits of Christ put at the disposal of the Church and the promise that His merits shall be adequate. The inn is the Catholic Church. The innkeeper represents the Catholic priesthood which "pours out on the wretchedness of souls the divine balm of the good Samaritan." (St. Andrew's Missal, p. 791) And the return of the Samaritan is the Second Coming of Christ. At His second coming He shall reward the priests for caring for the flock entrusted to it insofar as they have been faithful.

Thus we see that because of original sin man was lying close to death by the side of life's road. He was attacked by the devil and was stripped of grace and the gifts that God had bestowed on mankind. And he was left half-dead by the wayside. Now the priests and levites of the Old Testament were not concerned about his fate, nor indeed were they at all able to help mankind. But when Our Savior

came man was rescued.

Thus does St. Bede put it: "By becoming man, He came near to us and bending over us in our wretchedness, He healed our wounds pouring in that oil and wine which are the healing sacraments of our souls. The inn in which we are, by His care, is the Church whither Jesus Himself has brought us and wherein we receive the anointing of His grace, the oil of His sacraments, the bread and wine of His Eucharist, which enable us to continue on our way to heaven which is the home country of the human race." (St. Bede, Homily at Matins, St. Andrew's Missal, p. 789)

Now, what God did for us, He expects us to imitate and do for others. And so He has given us a command to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is, as I said, the obvious meaning of the parable.

But everyone knows that God gave a command to love one's neighbor. We have heard it many, many times: Love your neighbor as yourself. Why then is there so little true Christian Charity even among those who have the true faith?

Perhaps it is due to a lack of understanding about the specifics. Perhaps the problem is that we do not know what is meant by loving our neighbor as ourselves. And so I would like to explain a little bit in a specific way what is meant by the commandment to love our neighbor. And as I do, I would ask you to apply it to yourself.

Measure yourself and your conduct against the standard which is given to us by the Church. To enable you to do this I would like to consider three things, as they are explained by the well-known moral theologian and Dominican priest, Fr. Dominic Pruemmer. The three things are:

- 1) the precept of charity;
- 2) the external acts of charity we are obliged to carry out, and;
- 3) sins against charity.

Under the commandment of charity,

we must consider first of all the existence of the command by God, the extent of the command, and the order in which we are to love.

**The Existence of the precept** is clear. Our Lord said: "And the second [commandment] ... is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mt. 22:39) Now this love of neighbor must be both external and internal. Pope Innocent XI condemned the idea which said that "We are not obliged to love our neighbor with an internal and formal act of love." He also condemned the proposition that "External acts alone are sufficient for satisfying the commandment to love the neighbor." And so from the teaching of Christ and of the popes it is clear that we must have a charity towards our neighbor which is both external and internal, that is, we must not only **act as though** we loved them, we must love them in truth with a genuine love.

What are **internal** acts of charity towards our neighbor? They are, first of all, to take delight at his success and prosperity; second, to be sorrowful at his adversity; third, to have a sincere desire for his good.

By **external** acts of charity we mean those acts of kindness which we show to our neighbor and which are called the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. They are each seven in number.

The spiritual works of mercy are: 1) to convert the sinner, 2) to instruct the ignorant, 3) to advise the doubtful, 4) to comfort the sorrowful, 5) to bear wrongs patiently, 6) to forgive injuries, 7) and, to pray for all, both living and dead.

The corporal works of mercy are: 1) to feed the hungry, 2) to give drink to the thirsty, 3) to clothe the naked, 4) to harbor the homeless, 5) to visit the sick, 6) to visit the imprisoned, 7) and, to bury the dead.

Now we speak of the extent of this commandment of charity.

The obligation to love our neighbor extends to all men who are capable of eternal happiness -- including our **enemies**. But we are bound to love our enemies, not as enemies, but

as fellow men. Our Lord said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you." (Mt 5:44) It is not that we love our enemies because they are our enemies. It is rather that we love our neighbor in spite of the fact that he is our enemy.

Now this love of our enemies must be a practical thing and not just a theoretical thing. "Therefore we must:

**1. avoid the hatred of enmity and all desire of revenge;**

**2. offer our enemy at least the ordinary signs of love; 'the ordinary signs of affection are those which we usually use for all men in similar circumstances.'**

**3. seek reconciliation in so far as that is within our power."** (Pruemmer, *Vademecum of Moral Theology*)

And last of all, we speak of **the order of charity.**

We are bound to love God above all else, then ourselves, and our neighbor in the third place.

Now this commandment to love our neighbor has both a positive and negative side. By the positive side we are obliged to do certain things. By the negative side of the commandments we are obliged not to do certain things. In other words, we can sin against charity by omitting certain acts we should do, for example the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. And we can sin against charity by committing other acts we should not do, such as hatred, enmity, envy, dissension, quarrelling, scandal, and co-operation in sin.

Let us then strive to imitate Our Lord and His great love for us. Let us not be like the pagans and the godless. Let us acknowledge that it is God's love that saves us. And it is God's command that we love what he loves and hate what He hates. And God loves and desires the salvation of all who can be saved -

- which means everyone who is not already consigned to the eternal flames of hell.

In this is holiness: to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of Him. As St. Paul says: "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col 3:14) And St. Peter says: "But before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) And finally echoes St. John the Apostle of Love: "Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity." (1 Jn 4:7,8) Thus as the scripture says: "If I have not charity I am nothing."

In St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians we read the Apostle to the Gentiles' great dissertation on charity, the same charity which inspired his enormous labors for Christ, and Christ's enormous labors for us:

"If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ... And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. ... And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." (I Cor. 13) †

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detriment of the Catholic belief in the Mass as the "unbloody Sacrifice of Calvary" made present upon the altar by the two-fold consecration through the agency of the priest who acts "in persona Christi."

To return to the dialogue Mass now and to propose it as the standard to be adopted everywhere is to ignore the theology of the Catholic liturgy, to ignore history, and to embrace one more measure of the process of destruction which produced the abomination which is the New Order of Mass. †