

Meditations: Sunday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 15th week of Ordinary Time.

- "The commandment of love is not too hard for you"
 - We are brothers and sisters in Christ
 - Compassion shown in deeds
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A PHARISEE is trying to provoke Jesus with a difficult question: what is the central message of the Law and the Prophets? But our Lord responds by asking him to provide the answer himself. And the doctor of the Law does so by quoting a verse from the Book of Deuteronomy: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (*Lk 10:27*).

This passage from Deuteronomy is part of an Old Testament scene that the Church captures in the first reading of today’s Mass. Moses is exhorting the people to love God above all things. He encourages them saying that to love in this way is not as difficult as it might seem: “This commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who

will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (*Deut 30:11-14*).

What does it mean to say that the commandment of love is closer than the heights of the firmament and the lands across the ocean? The answer is implied in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is found in today's Gospel passage. There, a man comes to the aid of a stranger and, in doing so, shows that he is truly a *neighbor*. Thus we come to realize that our love for God is shown in our love for those close to us. We glimpse here the mystery of the union between these two loves. As Saint Josemaría said: "In any act of fraternity, the head and the heart often cannot

distinguish whether it is a matter of service to God or service to our brothers and sisters – because, in the second case, what we are doing is serving God twice.”^[1] —

IN WHAT SENSE can we say that loving our neighbor is also a way of loving God? A teacher who fosters the students’ eagerness to learn and who explains the subject clearly will receive a double gratitude at the end of the school year: both from the children and from their parents. Likewise when we serve another person, we also receive gratitude from our Father God. The foundation of this explanation, which prepares us for a better understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan, is found in the second reading of today’s Mass.

Christ united all humanity through his own sacrifice. From that moment on, all the baptized are *brothers and sisters in Christ*, and therefore *children* of the same Father. This reality, as mysterious as it is sublime, is expressed by Saint Paul in his letter to the Christians at Colossae. He tells them that Christ is the firstborn, the head of the Church. Through the shedding of his blood, he has reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven (cf. *Col 1:17-20*). By uniting us through his blood, Jesus transformed those we encounter in our life into neighbors, brothers and sisters who deserve our compassion. We see this reality reflected in Saint Josemaría's universal heart. He was concerned about the sanctity and salvation of all men and women; he valued them so highly because "every single person is worth all the blood of Christ."^[2] —

All the saints have received light from God to better understand this truth. Many began apostolic works, for they realized that caring for others was the same as caring for Christ. For example, a visitor to a house of charity run by nuns – dedicated to caring for abandoned, terminally ill patients—exclaimed: “The work you do here is truly admirable. I wouldn’t do this for a million dollars.” To which the nun in charge responded simply: “Nor would we.”

THE DOCTOR of the Law asks Jesus about the true meaning of the word “neighbor.” And our Lord responds with a parable. A man goes down from Jerusalem (a city located about 750 meters above sea level) to Jericho (250 meters below sea level). Thus the traveler had to descend more

than 1,000 meters on the way, crossing twenty-five kilometers of steep barren lands. This produces in the narrative an atmosphere of danger and risk. And indeed, the traveler is attacked and wounded, only to be left abandoned by the side of the road. A priest and a Levite, who offer service in the Temple of Jerusalem, pass by without stopping, afraid to get involved. Only a Samaritan, a member of a people often at odds with the Jews (see *2 Kings* 17), stops to help. He binds up the victim's wounds and takes him to an inn to be cared for during his convalescence. Then Jesus surprises the Pharisee with this question: "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, 'The one who showed mercy to him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" (*Lk* 10:36-37).

“Life is made up of encounters,” Leo XIV said, “and in these encounters, who we are is revealed. We find ourselves in front of others, faced with their fragility and weakness, and we can decide what to do: to take care of them or pretend nothing is wrong.”^[3] In our daily lives, we too encounter people who require our care: a poor person living on the street, an elderly woman unable to care for herself, a sick person who is alone... With this parable, Jesus teaches us that “compassion is expressed through specific actions. A Samaritan draws near to the man in need because, if you want to help someone, you cannot think of keeping your distance; you have to get involved, get dirty, perhaps be contaminated; he binds the wounds after cleaning them with oil and wine; he loads him onto his horse, taking on the burden, because one who truly helps is willing to feel the weight of the other’s pain; he takes

him to an inn where he spends money, ‘two silver coins,’ more or less two days of work; and he undertakes to return and eventually pay more, because the other is not a package to deliver, but someone to care for.”^[4] We can ask our Lady to help us have a mother’s heart like hers, which will lead us to have compassion, shown in specific deeds, for the people close to us.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, May 1935 – September 1950, no. 75.

^[2] Cf. St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 80.

^[3] Leo XIV, Audience, 28 May 2025.

^[4] *Ibid.*

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