

8th Gospel Luke 10:25-37

"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."

In the light of the reflection we had on Wednesday at the mission, one might say that a Canadian doctor would be worse than a Levite or a priest for the man lying half dead on the path of life. Out of "compassion", the doctor would have killed the poor man, since he was already half dead, and someone just needed to fulfill the rest and help him die. One might argue that the doctor could not perform euthanasia without the man's consent. And this is true, he couldn't trespass the right to self-determination of the "individual", which for the health care practitioner is paramount.



However, in the gospel, the man does not speak. He is in a complete stage of vulnerability, with his life depending on others. He is in between life and death. And we know, when people reach that moment there is a desire to live and a temptation to die. And from our community life we can testify that there is no clear winner when it comes to statistics.

There is also prayer. Looking out for mercy, for someone to care. Today, even those who opt for euthanasia out of this place of self-determination, where God has nothing to say, still look to add a form of "meaning" to the act of killing. There is a need to spiritualize the killing, otherwise it is not attractive and inspiring enough. To justify it. Because it cannot justify itself through what it is. However, apart from this spiritual illness, there is real prayer also in that moment of complete vulnerability.

On Friday, just at the end of the day, as we were completing the reflection on the gospel, E. comes through the doors and asks for prayers. She did that a few times over the year. She is a single mother who works more than 12 hours a day just to pay for the basics. Recently she had to move in a basement apartment because she could not afford the rent in the apartment she had. On top of that, her teenage children have a rough time adapting to the Canadian life. On the path of her life she feels defeated, beaten down without the perspective of walking again, alone and without much hope that something practical will happen in her life to help her and the children walk again. In that complete moment of vulnerability, she prayed to God saying that she entrusted her two children to Him, so he becomes their Father. And she trusts Him with that. She prayed in this way with tears, and hope. She prayed with joy. She did the same thing on Friday. She prayed the same, again and again...

The prayer of the half dead man would have been similar. He would have surrendered himself completely to God in that moment. And having hope seeing the coming presence of the priest and of the Levite. The coming presence of those who have authority, who pray to the same God for mercy. What would have happened in the heart of the man, seeing the ignorance of those who are entrusted by God with authority to care for his life? And yet, they saw him worthy of dying and not of living. How is that possible?

It is worth spending a few thoughts on the heart of those who are entrusted with authority. We have the experience within the community of an abundance of kindness that pours out from the heart of the people who help during the week. This was well illustrated during the volunteer appreciation night, where the goodness of many hearts was gathered in one place. We see it in action during the week. People are doing good naturally. We are longing for the opportunity to do good. The simplicity of the man who is ready to learn to love and act for the sake of his neighbour is illustrated by the Samaritan. He represents the simplicity of human nature who is naturally always ready to care. To be present. Who is always longing for eternal life by caring for the life that is now broken and fragile. He can connect with the brokenness of his neighbour because his life is the same. He cares for the wounds of his neighbour because he hopes that one day his wounds would also heal. The Samaritan knows what it means to have a life that is at the margins, unvalued by those who are entrusted with care from God, because he also lives it every day.

On Wednesday, the palliative care doctor told us that in the hospital, some doctors consider as one of the most rewarding experiences seeing euthanasia performed on people. One could not be more scared wondering at how this could have happened. What does this repeated experience do to the soul of the health care practitioners? How does it change them? If they do not see life in those who are sick how can they see life in their own brokenness? How can they heal when they do not believe themselves worthy of being fully alive?

As the community icon painted during the week by Amelia, magnifies in the room the mercy of God and the love that man has for God and his neighbour and for himself (where St Francis cares for Jesus sharing in his wounds), the image of a doctor feeling “rewarded” by a euthanasia execution is the modern image of the time we live today. It reveals something about the illness that these days affects us all. Can we be healed of it? The professor on Wednesday was skeptical that something will happen from inside the health care system. The painful image that reflects on us the illness that touches us all, is going to get more and more twisted. He thought that the change in the soul of the modern health care practitioner, if any, could only come from the outside. Or, through extension, the heart of any person entrusted to care these days.

A conclusion from Laura:

On Thursday morning we reflected for a few minutes on what we heard on Wednesday night. We talked about euthanasia and got scared even more. Laura intervened in the discussion with a story that happened that very day at breakfast. With no relevance to euthanasia.

“There was a homeless person sleeping outside”, she said. “Covered in a blanket. And I went to him and I told him: you can come inside. You can warm up and have some food and a coffee or tea. I talked to him. And he came. And there are many people who come every morning. They eat, they get warm and have something warm to drink. This is a good place where people can come, and they are taken cared of. God, you know, he is pleased with that”.

I did not see that man sleeping outside that morning. As many times, having “important things to do”, I ignored many around the mission. People who need presence and attention. And yet, the community and all the volunteers never fail to care for all. Despite the distractions of the priest. The icon of the small community who cares for all is the healing source of the modern soul today.

As watching people euthanizing each other creates a strange taste for your own morbidity and for the death of others, all the more so, the icon of the suffering servant who cares for his master who has been stripped of his clothes and is abandoned, brings holiness to the soul. That’s why he can act with all his strength and all his soul and with all his mind, because there is unity within himself. A sign of something being healed.

Gospel reflection during the week:

*One of themes on Friday was about receiving help from the one you least expected. From the enemy, while your own people pass by you. Ozzy said the Turks and the Greeks were never on good terms. “You know, that was until we had that earthquake. And the first who helped us were the Greeks. When we were down and in need of help, they were the first ones to help. The enemy is the one who w]has mercy on you”

*Kidán said on Friday that the gospel tells us to care until healing is completed. We cannot stop halfway.

*On Thursday, one of the brothers shared some thoughts on euthanasia in Canada and his experience with the health care system in Toronto. He thinks people committing suicide creates a big mess. Once he was walking downtown and he just witnessed a terrible thing like that. Somebody jumping of a building. And there was this city cleaner that was cleaning the streets. But he had headphones on his ears. It happened very close to him. But having headphones and

his back turned he could not see or hear what happened. He was cleaning on the other side of the street. Imagine cleaning the mess ... That's why they legalize it, because they don't want to clean the mess left by the people. Now everything is clean and dignifying.

*He also shared his experience with the health care system. He has an immune illness that keeps him more inside. That's why he cannot come inside to eat with us. But one time, he went to the hospital having a bullet on his elbow. "They told me to sit down and wait. Imagine, to sit down and wait, with a bullet in my elbow. And to take a candy. They were too busy with other things."

*One volunteer shared on Friday that he was applying to study to become a paramedic. It is a long process. He has to pass all kind of tests. A physical one, to carry hundred of pounds in your arms. A physics tests, math and chemistry and interviews. To prove to them why you care becoming a paramedic.

It was like in the gospel: "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind ... " At least someone got it right.

Happy feast!!!

St John's feast day:

Do not forget this **Monday at 6:30 pm** we celebrate the feast of St John the Compassionate. We have vespers and a gathering after that with food and good will.

On Tuesday morning there is a **Liturgy at 7:00 am**.

Come to pray together and express gratitude for being called to taste the goodness of life and the joy of being alive within the community. For testifying the good news in the life of the poor and in the lives of all. To bring thanks to St John the Compassionate for his care, prayer, protection and guidance. And through him to all who have been serving within the community from the very beginning or from the very late.

Happy feast!

On Saturday we celebrated the wedding of James and Maria. A joy that they did not want to keep only for themselves but share with all of us. A joy that is reflected in the heart of their children and in the heart of their parents. A joy that is becoming deeper within their family, a joy that is the root of their union. The joy of marriage that speaks back to the many sorrows that today come to us through the disunity we all witness. May God grant them many years in this joy, that they may continue to be for each other what Christ is for his church. An offering gift unto eternal life. For the sake of all. Many blessed years!



*"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."



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

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