

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading - Deuteronomy 30:10–14

10 because you will obey the voice of the Lord, your God, keeping the commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and your whole being. 11 For this command which I am giving you today is not too wondrous or remote for you. 12 It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?” 13 Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?” 14 No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.

Psalm, Option I Psalm 69:33 3“See, you lowly ones, and be glad; you who seek God, take heart!

Second Reading - Colossians 1:15–20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Gospel - Luke 10:25–37

25 There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” 27 He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” 29 But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 32 Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 33 But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. 34 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. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ 36 Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” 37 He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”¹

¹ [Catholic Daily Readings](#) (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).

The Law Within: Fidelity and the Good Samaritan

Today's readings remind us that it isn't, despite what we tell ourselves, hard to know the foundation truths of the law that comes from God which is within us as natural law.² In your mouth: that is, in language you understand, memorize, and recite. And in your heart: that is, you already know it, internalized and appropriated. All you have to do is humbly obey.³ Wherein lies the difficulty, as we all know too well – doing what he says.

In Psalm 69⁴ as it relates to the story of the good Samaritan, we are the victim and Jesus is the Samaritan modelling the difference between the good to do and the evil to avoid. In today's First Reading Moses, in his parting words to the Israelites, encourages them to see that what the Lord expects of them is not hard to know or achieve: it is turning to God with all their heart and soul. When Moses speaks to them just before they finally enter the Promised Land, he is pleading with them to turn to God with all their heart, to choose in accord with their nature, the law of God, authentic human life in this world lived with a passionate desire for life with God in the next.

The first part of the Gospel reading picks up the theme of Moses' call to faithfulness. That having been saved, having accepted Christ as savior demands fidelity. It demands that we recognize that not only are we saved for eternal life with God, but that our lives in this world are to have a very different quality. With the Pharisee we are to believe that we ought to, *"love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." Fidelity is the response to the question, *"Who do you say that I am..."* and choosing to act in accord with this truth that we affirm. Jesus says, *"if you love me, follow my commandments."* And so, we do. There can be no orthodoxy without orthopraxis. Christian faith truly lived results in a bonding with people everywhere. It is a living out of the prayer, "Our Father"⁵. It is faith with total trust in God and his message that comes through Christ in the New Testament. It is love as the driving power of all our actions and relationships. We cannot have one without the other.

In the second part of the Gospel reading, we are given a strong visual of what happens when we live in opposition to God, in discord with ourselves and others. We also see that God, in response to our cry for help, will not abandon us to death, but will be merciful. Each of us has been robbed of our original holiness by original sin. Our selfishness and sins, and the sins of others, have deeply wounded our souls. We lay on the side of life's path in need of a Savior. We have been bruised and broken and wounded by life in a fallen world.

The Good Samaritan is, above all, a story to help us understand what Jesus has done for us - for the humanity, and for each of us individually.⁶ In his incarnation, Jesus comes to us like the Good Samaritan.

² Catholic Encyclopedia, <https://archive.org/details/07470918.6.emory.edu/page/n3>

³ Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 505.

⁴ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/69>

⁵ <https://thejesuitpost.org/2019/11/catholic-101-praying-the-our-father/>

⁶ Disputed Questions on Truth, Q. 24, A. 13, C., Thomas Aquinas 1256 AD Theological Work; Whether someone in a state of grace is able to avoid mortal sin Source. Translated by Robert W. Mulligan, SJ, from the definitive Leonine text (Henry Regnery Company, 1952)

In this parable there are three points to be noted. Firstly, the manifold misery of sinners: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem." Secondly, is shown the manifold pity of Christ to the sinner: "A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." Thirdly, the rule which is given to us for imitation: "Go, and do thou likewise."

I. On the first head it is to be noted, that men incur a fourfold misery when they sin. (1) They are deprived of heavenly glory: "went down from Jerusalem," &c., Gloss. That man by the falling away of trifling, to miseries, and to the infirmity of this sad and changeable life, descends from the heavenly Jerusalem. The wicked shall hide themselves, "for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His Majesty," Isai. 2:19. (2) The wicked are subjected under wicked spirits: "and fell among

The key words in the story are “compassion” and “mercy”. In fact, the verb used to express the feelings of the Samaritan for the victim lying on the road is the same as that used to describe Jesus’ compassion for the crowd, when he sees them as “like sheep without a shepherd”. He is the mercy of God which heals and restores us with the oil and wine of his sacraments, who pays for our salvation with his own sacrifice on the cross at Calvary, who entrusts the boundless riches of his grace to his own innkeeper, the Church, who in turn watches over our convalescence, our growth into Christian maturity, until Jesus comes again.

God, who loved us so much that the only begotten Son Jesus was sent to save us through his life, death, and resurrection – restored our hope of eternal life. However, we still must deal with concupiscence.⁷ Many of us misunderstand the actual and the intended effects of our salvation. We like to think that if God is truly loving and merciful then it shouldn’t matter what we do since we have no real freedom, no real choice, that although baptism certainly freed us from original sin, we are still bound to sin. After all, Jesus did say, the ‘spirit is willing’ the ‘flesh is weak’. We say to God that we know and believe the truth, but it’s just too hard to live the truth. Isn’t this the human condition, nothing is really my fault? Isn’t that why Jesus gave us the sacrament of reconciliation? To heal us and restore our relationship with God?

There’s no doubt that Jesus understood the human condition very well, and that he provided a way for us to be reconciled, even repeatedly, if we in fact sinned. But he didn’t say we will for sure sin, or that we can’t avoid temptation. In fact, he said, ‘go and sin no more’, ‘be holy’, ‘be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect’. God created us free, in the beginning and each of us individually. We are free to choose, life or death, but our freedom needs the aide of grace if we are to choose with heart and mind oriented to holiness.⁸ The truth is that although the consequence of original sin, concupiscence, can make us weak, it only inclines toward sin, it is not a guarantee of sinful behavior. The prophets, Jesus, the Saints and our own experience teach us exactly how not to fall to temptation if we remain in him, listen, and do what he says.⁹ God has assured us that it is unattainable unless we listen to Christ and do what he says. As Pope Pius XII affirmed, *“It is, alas, true that the sin of Adam has caused a deep disturbance in our corporal faculties and our passions, so that they wish to gain control of the life of the senses and even of the spirit, obscuring our reason and weakening our will. But Christ’s grace is given us, especially by the sacraments, to help us to keep our bodies in subjection and to live by the spirit. [For example] The virtue of chastity does not mean that we are insensible to the urge of concupiscence, but that we subordinate it to reason and the law of grace, by striving wholeheartedly after what is noblest in human and Christian life.”*¹⁰

thieves,” Gloss. In the power of the evil spirits: “and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will,” 2 S. Tim. 2:26 (3) They are despoiled of their good possessions: “which stripped him of his raiment,” Gloss. It refers to the garments of spiritual grace: “into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin,” Wisdom 1:4. (4) They are wounded in their natural good things: “and wounded him;” bring wounds upon him, that is, sins, by which the integrity of human nature is violated. “If there were not natural good things vices could not harm them; but now what they do is to take away integrity, beauty, virtue, and salvation” (S. Augustine).

II. On the second head it is to be noted, four kinds of compassion are expressed which Christ manifested towards sinners. (1) Was the taking of human nature: “A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when He saw him he had compassion on him,” Gloss. The Samaritan is Christ, who was made man for our sakes, that He might deliver us from this present life. (2) Was the institution of the Sacraments for the salvation of sinners: “and bound up his wounds,” Gloss. In baptism: “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds,” Psalm 147:3. (3) Was the infusion of the grace of the Holy Spirit: “pouring in oil,” Gloss. The charisma of the Holy Spirit: “but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things ... whatsoever I have said unto you,” S. John 14:26. “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” S. John 1:16, 17. (4) In enduring the bitterness of His passion for sinners: “and set Him on His own beast.” Gloss. The beast is His flesh, in which He places the wounded, because He “bare our sins in His own Body on the tree,” 1 S. Peter 2:24.6

⁷ Catholic Encyclopedia <https://archive.org/details/07470918.6.emory.edu/page/n3>

⁸ Disputed Questions on Truth, Q. 24, A. 12, C., Thomas Aquinas 1256 AD Theological Work. Translated by Robert W. Mulligan, SJ, from the definitive Leonine text (Henry Regnery Company, 1952)

⁹ https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_25121888_exeunte-iam-anno.html

¹⁰ https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25031954_sacra-virginitas.html

As Christians, we have the privilege of knowing that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of human history, and the Lord and Savior of each one of our lives. As such, we ought to adjust our way of thinking and living to be increasingly centered on him. We ought to study what he has told us about how to live. We ought to dedicate ourselves to living as he lived. We ought always and readily repent from the sins that distance us from him. We ought to make use of the many gifts he has given us to help us through life, like prayer, Scripture, the guidance of the Church, the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, the Holy Spirit and the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, the theological virtues and the ability to develop the cardinal virtues. The Council of Trent affirmed this teaching¹¹, “*God does not command impossible things; when he makes a commandment, he is telling you to do what you can and to ask (his help) as regards what is beyond you, and he helps you to fulfil it*”.¹²

What holds us back from deciding once and for all to make Christ's way our way all the way? Team Jesus for the win!

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Concupiscence:** The inclination or tendency to sin, a consequence of original sin, which makes it harder to choose good but does not make sinful behavior inevitable.
- **Fidelity:** Faithfulness, loyalty, and commitment, particularly in the context of one's relationship with God, responding to His salvation with obedience to His commands.
- **Grace:** God's unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their sanctification, enabling them to respond to His call and live a holy life. It is particularly received through Christ and the sacraments.
- **Incarnation:** The Christian doctrine that God the Son (Jesus Christ) became flesh, assuming a human nature while retaining His divine nature.
- **Natural Law:** The inherent moral order discoverable by human reason, believed to be inscribed within the human heart by God, providing foundational truths about right and wrong.
- **Orthodoxy:** "Right belief" or correct doctrine; adherence to the accepted creeds and tenets of a religion.
- **Orthopraxis:** "Right practice" or correct action; the proper performance of religious rites, ethical conduct, and living out one's faith. The text emphasizes that it is inseparable from orthodoxy.
- **Original Holiness:** The original state of grace and communion with God that humanity possessed before the Fall, characterized by integrity and harmony.
- **Original Sin:** The first sin of Adam and Eve, which resulted in the loss of original holiness and justice for humanity, introducing concupiscence, suffering, and death into the world.
- **Promised Land:** In the Old Testament, the land of Canaan, promised by God to Abraham and his descendants. Symbolically, it represents the goal or fulfillment of God's promises.
- **Sacraments:** Sacred rituals or outward signs instituted by Christ, by which invisible grace is conveyed. The text specifically mentions Baptism, Eucharist, and Reconciliation as channels of healing and restoration.
- **Salvation:** The act of being saved from sin and its consequences (death, separation from God) and brought into eternal life with God, primarily through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- **Theological Virtues:** Faith, hope, and charity (love); virtues that are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as His children and meriting eternal life.

How does Christian faith relate to obedience to God's law?

Christian faith emphasizes that knowing God's law is not inherently difficult, as it is understood to be ingrained within us as natural law. The challenge lies not in comprehension, but in humbly obeying what God commands. This obedience, referred to as "orthopraxis," is a necessary complement to "orthodoxy" (correct belief). True Christian living involves both internalizing God's truth in the heart and actively living it out through actions, reflecting a passionate desire for life with God and a commitment to His commandments.

¹¹ *De iustificatione*, 11

¹² James Gavigan, Brian McCarthy, and Thomas McGovern, eds., [The Pentateuch](#), The Navarre Bible (Dublin; New York: Four Courts Press; Scepter Publishers, 1999), 781.

What is the significance of the "Good Samaritan" parable in understanding Christian salvation?

The Good Samaritan parable serves as a powerful allegory for Jesus's role as Savior. Humanity, wounded and robbed of its original holiness by sin, is depicted as the victim lying by the roadside. Jesus, like the Good Samaritan, demonstrates immense compassion and mercy by coming to our aid. His incarnation, sacrifice on the cross, and the establishment of sacraments (like Baptism and Reconciliation) are understood as acts of healing and restoration, binding our wounds with "oil and wine" (grace and sacraments) and entrusting us to the care of the Church. The parable also calls Christians to imitate this compassionate action in their own lives.

How does original sin and concupiscence affect human freedom and our ability to avoid sin?

Original sin has led to "concupiscence," a deep disturbance in human faculties that inclines us towards sin, obscuring reason and weakening the will. However, this inclination is not a guarantee of sinful behavior. God created humans with free will, enabling them to choose between life and death. While concupiscence makes us weak, it does not remove our freedom. Grace, especially through the sacraments, is given to help us overcome these inclinations, allowing us to subordinate desires to reason and God's law. Therefore, while temptation exists, Christians are not bound to sin and are called to strive for holiness.

What is God's expectation for human behavior despite the challenges of the human condition?

Despite understanding the human condition and the inclination to sin, God's expectation remains for humanity to "go and sin no more," to "be holy," and to "be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." This seemingly high standard is not presented as impossible, but rather as attainable through reliance on God's grace. The Council of Trent affirmed that "God does not command impossible things; when he makes a commandment, he is telling you to do what you can and to ask (his help) as regards what is beyond you, and he helps you to fulfil it." This implies a call to continuous striving, aided by divine assistance.

What are the key elements of Christ's compassion for sinners, as illustrated in the Good Samaritan parable?

Christ's compassion for sinners, as paralleled in the Good Samaritan, is manifested in four ways:

1. **Taking on human nature:** Just as the Samaritan came to where the wounded man was, Christ "was made man for our sakes" to deliver us.
2. **Institution of Sacraments:** "Binding up wounds" signifies the institution of sacraments like Baptism, which heal and restore.
3. **Infusion of the Holy Spirit's grace:** "Pouring in oil" represents the bestowal of the Holy Spirit's charisma, providing guidance and truth.
4. **Enduring His passion:** "Setting Him on His own beast" symbolizes Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the cross, enduring suffering for our salvation.

How does Christian fidelity relate to personal transformation and living in the world?

Fidelity in Christianity is a response to the question, "Who do you say that I am?" and a commitment to act in accordance with that truth. It means not only accepting Christ as Savior for eternal life but also allowing this salvation to transform one's life in the present world. This involves a profound shift in thinking and living, centering oneself on Jesus, studying His teachings, imitating His life, repenting from sin, and actively utilizing the spiritual gifts provided, such as prayer, Scripture, sacraments, and the guidance of the Church. This transformation leads to a "very different quality" of life, characterized by love as the driving force.

What spiritual "wounds" do humans incur when they sin, according to the theological interpretation of the Good Samaritan?

Theological interpretation of the Good Samaritan parable describes a "fourfold misery" incurred by sinners:

1. **Deprivation of heavenly glory:** Symbolized by "going down from Jerusalem," implying a descent from a state of grace and connection to God.
2. **Ensnarement by evil spirits:** Being in "the power of the evil spirits," likened to being "taken captive by him at his will."
3. **Despoilment of spiritual grace:** "Stripped of his raiment" refers to the loss of "garments of spiritual grace," meaning wisdom cannot enter a soul subject to sin.
4. **Wounding of natural good:** "Wounded him" signifies that sins violate the integrity of human nature, taking away integrity, beauty, virtue, and salvation.

What resources has God provided to help Christians live a holy life and avoid sin?

God has provided numerous resources to assist Christians in living a holy life and avoiding sin, acknowledging the challenges posed by concupiscence. These include:

- **Prayer:** A direct means of communication and seeking divine assistance.
- **Scripture:** The revealed word of God, offering guidance and truth.
- **Guidance of the Church:** The collective wisdom and teaching authority of the Church.
- **Sacraments:** Specifically the Eucharist (for nourishment and bonding with Christ) and Reconciliation (for forgiveness and restoration).
- **Holy Spirit and its gifts:** The indwelling Spirit empowering believers and bestowing spiritual gifts.
- **Theological virtues:** Faith, hope, and charity, which orient the soul towards God.
- **Cardinal virtues:** Prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, which can be developed to guide moral behavior. Through these means, God provides the necessary grace to choose life and holiness, subordinating human weaknesses to divine will.