



WORLD
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THE COMPASSION OF THE SAMARITAN: LOVING BY BEARING ANOTHER'S PAIN





HOMILY WITH A BIBLICAL FOCUS

Dear brothers and sisters, today, the 34th World Day of the Sick invites us to contemplate one of the best-known and, we might say, most challenging parables for humanity: that of the **Good Samaritan**. Jesus, as a true teacher and guide, shows us that loving our neighbor is not a matter of theory, but rather charity put into practice, which breaks down cultural, religious, and social barriers. It is loving to share in the suffering of others, helping to bear the burden of the fragility broken by illness, which prevents them from living in peace and with dignity.

This action of the Samaritan brings to the present what helping those in need should mean for a Jew. Yes, it means renewing grateful remembrance of the God of the Covenant, as indicated in the Book of Leviticus 19:18: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*," a commandment that appears in the Law and is engraved in the heart and memory of the Jewish people. Therein lies the intention of Jesus' teaching. For its part, Deuteronomy 10:19 also engraves in the heart of the people of Israel: "*You shall love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt*," again offering an invitation to concrete and universal action, for God constantly reminds the people that mercy must extend beyond tribal boundaries. Thus, along with widows, foreigners, and orphans, the sick preferentially move the heart of God. Therefore, the prophets will also be spokesmen for this revelation of the God of Israel, who is incapable of being indifferent to human suffering: "*Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows...*" (Isaiah 53:4), that is, with the image of the suffering servant, every illness is seen and embraced by God and becomes a propitious place for the revelation of His Love.



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On the other hand, we know well that it is in the parable of the Good Samaritan that Jesus redefines who our neighbor is: not only those close to us, but everyone who needs our help. Help, therefore, encompasses the breadth of care, with its various levels and ways of offering those who suffer a different perspective on their own reality. It is about making credible and visible the experience of Christians and baptized individuals acting in accordance with their identity: being a brother, being a sister, who sees the need and is moved by the criterion of mercy, by love: "*I was sick and you visited me...*" (Matthew 25:35-36). This affirms the radical nature of faith in consonance with the love that works for the good of others: "*Whoever does not love their brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen*" (1 John 4:20).

In this parable, the priest and the Levite represent an empty religiosity, incapable of stopping to help those who suffer, or so preoccupied with fulfilling the law that they forget to love. That is why Benedict XVI, in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, and Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, present this parable as a model of Christian charity, which is not limited to feelings, but is transformed into action—action that helps to recreate social bonds. The Samaritan, considered an enemy by the Jews, is the one who becomes an image of Christ: he approaches, heals the wounds, pays with his own resources, and promises to return. Therefore, he teaches us that true faith is measured in **concrete acts of mercy**. It is not enough to perform rituals. No. Because love of neighbor is the most authentic expression of our relationship with God. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us (no. 1827): "*Charity is the form of all the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves.*"

This means, then, that being like the Samaritan involves a series of actions and attitudes that put Jesus' words into practice whenever possible: "*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*" (Matthew 25:40). We are talking about reaching out to those who suffer, without asking where they come from or what they believe. It means breaking down prejudices and building bridges in a world marked by divisions. It means practicing mercy in everyday life: in the family, at work, in the community.



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Acting in this way is to emphasize that this parable is not just a moral story; it is a call to conversion. Jesus wants and expects us to be neighbors, living out charity as the heart of the Gospel.

Let us ask the Lord that the Eucharist we celebrate may strengthen us to go out and meet the wounded of our time with concrete acts of love and mercy. May the experience of each sick person, in the midst of their vulnerability, allow them not only to recognize their limitations but also the greatness of true fraternity, and perhaps, paraphrasing that centurion concerned about the health of his servant, may they express: **Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but a word, a gesture and your presence will be enough to heal me...**

