

## HOMILY FOR THE 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR C

1. Most difficult challenge for human beings is question of death
  - a. Why must we die, what does it mean to be dead
  - b. Difficult to imagine life going on without us
  - c. Deep instinct for life in every creature
  - d. As humans we know there is more to life than just survival
  - e. There are folk tales of people being granted wish to live forever
    - i. Discover so much that is missing when lose health and friends
    - ii. Most suicides are not desire for death but rather desire to escape pain in life
2. Question raised by the scholar of the law is not merely how do we live forever
  - a. Picture of heaven that would be boring, time passing forever
  - b. Question of eternal life is how can I find life that will be joyful and meaningful
  - c. Want a life that has an energy and enthusiasm that makes our present struggles worthwhile
3. Looking for this kind of life makes the question that the scholar asks important
  - a. How can I find life that will truly be real and worthwhile, where I do not have to be afraid of losing what is important to me
  - b. Interesting how Jesus tells the man to use his training: what do you read in the law
  - c. Scholar has insight to answer to love God with all that we are and neighbor as yourself
  - d. Scholar, sounds embarrassed, wants to justify himself who is my neighbor
4. Pretty important question, easy to fool ourselves into thinking we love God
  - a. We depend on God for everything so we believe we love Him
    - i. This love is abstract, how do I measure how much I love God
  - b. Second part of the commandment is more concrete, love my neighbor as myself
    - i. Because it is so real question becomes who is my neighbor, who do I have to love
5. Jesus being an excellent teacher does not try to give a fancy definition of neighbor, instead tells a story
  - a. A man on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem is beaten by robbers and left half dead by side of road
    - i. This was a common occurrence in those days, so it is real possibility to listeners
  - b. In story first a priest and then Levite pass by
    - i. Highly regarded people, person would want to identify with as hear story
    - ii. Might expect them to stop since Jewish law encouraged merciful work of burying dead
    - iii. Every listener could conceive of reasons why not to stop
      1. Is man really hurt or is it a trap to get me to stop
      2. Maybe robbers are still near, need to get to safety
      3. Obligations in temple, if touch a dead man become unclean
        - a. Have to perform cleansing rituals, instead of doing important work of sacrifice
      4. Jesus leaves reasons open so each person can imagine why I would not have stopped
    - iv. Jesus adds an unexpected twist to the story for those hearing story
    - v. A Samaritan is now walking down that road
      1. Relationship of Jews and Samaritans in that day was very similar to that between Jews and Palestinians today
      2. Not only do they not trust each other, each can come up with stories of atrocities that the other side did to them
    - vi. When listeners hear this part of the story, probably thinking that poor man; he thought he had it bad being beaten and left on side of road
      1. What is going to happen to him now

- c. What does he do: he cleans man's wounds, bandages him, lifts him on his animal to bring the man to an inn, where he cares for him
  - i. Remember this is supposed to be his enemy; still does more
  - ii. Next day he gives innkeeper money to care for the man and promises to return with more if needed
- 6. Jesus conclude with question: so who was neighbor to victim of the robbers
  - a. Interesting that the scholar cannot bring himself to say the Samaritan, one who treated him with mercy
  - b. Jesus exhortation to the scholar and us is do not worry about who is my neighbor; become a neighbor to anyone who needs one even your worst enemy
- 7. Jesus Himself is an example of this
  - a. Instead of being faithful to the laws of God, we constantly fail to live up to them
  - b. We lack gratitude to God for his kindness, we treat possessions as things to be hoarded or abused rather than gifts to enable us to serve God; we give into anger and jealousy and selfishness
  - c. Consequences are that we live in a world that does not believe in making sacrifices for each other; we become both victims and victimizers who have alienated ourselves from God
- 8. God does not abandon us; as the Son of God he becomes human in Jesus to show us His mercy
  - a. In Jesus He gives his life for us to purify and bind up our spiritual wounds
  - b. He gives us the sacraments to nourish us and give us healing
  - c. Through his words like today's gospel, he encourages us to celebrate His love for us by becoming neighbors to all
  - d. He is telling us that with His help, we can do great wonders, even showing mercy on our worst enemy