

## **HOMILY The Good Samaritan 13/14 July 2019 OMHRSTM**

We are familiar with this parable; the hero - “The Good Samaritan” - has found a place in our culture as the archetypical do-gooder, in the most positive sense of that expression.

However, for a moment, let’s consider the two other principal characters: The Priest and The Levite. I wonder what they said to themselves as they passed by on the other side of the road. Was it something like: “Oh, I’d like to help but...” and then followed their most plausible excuse for not getting involved. Some worthy or important reason of course, such as being late for a really important meeting or a commitment of a religious sort. Never mind, the good excuse is not what concerns us, though it may indeed have been the truth.

No, of greater concern are those first words: “Oh, I’d like to help but...” You see, that’s just where the problem is. It’s a lie. A great big lie. You see if they had really wanted to help, then the excuses would not have been necessary. In fact they would have not needed to even think of any excuses, because their words to the people they let down or disappointed because they had got held up helping the poor victim of crime, well they would not have been excuses but perfectly good and valid reasons for not turning up as expected. And if we look at the lives of the saints we find they never needed such lies and excuses, because they got on with doing just what was needed, just like the Good Samaritan.

What is really wrong with that “Oh, I’d like to help but...” is that the Priest and the Levite would have been lying to themselves. If we use such an excuse are we lying to ourselves? If we cannot tell the truth to ourselves, if we cannot be honest with ourselves, then surely we are bound to have problems. Facing up to who we are, what sort of person we are, is basic. If we cannot get the foundation right, then no matter how highly thought out, the rest of our morality is flawed, intrinsically.

So, in this Mass, let us pray that we may, as the ancient Greeks did, know ourselves. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may guide us to be truthful, not only about ourselves, but also to ourselves. For if I can’t be honest with myself, what hope do I have of being honest with anyone else?

Canon Paschal Ryan

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