

## Pope Francis: Love thy neighbour like the Good Samaritan

(Vatican Radio) The story of the Good Samaritan and its lesson of “love thy neighbour” were at the heart of Pope Francis’ catechesis during the General Audience on Wednesday 27 April.

### Listen to the report by Tracey McClure:



Let us never forget: we cannot stand by as onlookers when we see so many people worn out by hunger, violence and injustice: that’s Pope Francis’ call to Christians to become Good Samaritans in their everyday lives. “To ignore man’s suffering means to ignore God,” says the Pope who recalls how, in the parable, the Levite and the priest walk by the man who had been attacked by thieves and lay moribund on the side of the road.

Both men of the temple cult, their inaction was contrary to the Law of the Lord, Pope Francis says. The Law obliges us to stop and help anyone in distress. And here, the parable offers us a lesson: that it’s not a given “that those who frequent the house of God and are aware of His mercy know how to love the other.”

The Samaritan, a schismatic Jew, was despised in Jesus’ day as “an outsider, a pagan and impure,” notes the Pope. And he too had things to do – but when he saw the wounded man, he did not pass by as the other two men did. He stopped and “had compassion for him.”

“Compassion is an essential characteristic of God’s mercy” and “in the gestures and actions of the Good Samaritan, we recognize the action of God’s mercy throughout salvation history.”

“It is the same compassion with which God encounters each of us: He does not ignore us. He recognizes our pain, He knows when we need help and consolation. He comes close and never abandons us.”

The Samaritan, the Pope stresses, acts with true mercy: he binds the man’s wounds, takes him to a hostel, and “personally takes care of him.”

All of this, the Pope says, teaches us that compassion and love are not “vague” sentiments; but mean “caring for the other to the point of personal sacrifice.” If we have compassionate hearts, he adds, like Jesus, we can be close to anyone who is in need of help...

**Below, we publish the Holy Father's message to the English speaking pilgrims present in Saint Peter's Square:**

Dear Brothers and Sisters: In our catechesis for this Holy Year of Mercy, we now turn to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus had taught the great commandment of love for God and neighbour. In reply to the question: "Who is my neighbour?", he recounts the story of the priest and the levite who pass by a man in need at the side of the road. Their religiosity is ultimately inauthentic, for it does not find expression in service to others. Love, the Lord tells us, is never abstract or distant; it "sees" and it responds. The compassion shown by the Samaritan is an image of the infinite mercy of God, who always sees our needs and draws near to us in love. The command to love God and neighbour, then, is supremely practical; it entails caring for others even to the point of personal sacrifice. By the end of the parable, we see that the "neighbour" is not so much the man in need, but rather the one who responded to that need with compassion. Jesus tells all of us to be neighbours in this sense: "Go and do likewise". He himself is the model of the Good Samaritan; by imitating his love and compassion, we show ourselves truly to be his followers.

I greet the English-speaking visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the pilgrims from England, Sweden, Slovakia, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Lord, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

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