

"Who Is My Neighbour"

“Go and show mercy on him”

The criteria of a successful personality are in its relationships with others, and with everything around it, it is in its dealings with the world in which one lives.

We believe that men and things in our world have been put there by the providence of our loving-God. The nature of our relationships with people, and their quality do not form only a part of our life, which is more or less important, but we can say that this is, in fact, our life itself. Relationships for human beings as persons make up their manner of existence, so this is life itself. Consequently the question about our relationship with our neighbour is the most important matter in life.

This expert in Law, in today's reading, wanting to test Jesus put to Him the most difficult of all questions: "And who is my neighbour? ". In fact, relating this last question with the words immediately above "Love your neighbour as yourself", we can ask with this expert "and who is this one who is so worthy that we have to care for him as we care for our selves?". This is the very essence and the sense of this commandment of the Old

Testament, isn't it? "Love your neighbour as yourself," means actually to take care of him as of us.

Therefore, it is so essential in life to define who is, really, worthy of our care as if he is ourselves, whose life must be so interesting to us as if it is our life, whose life will occupy us just as we are occupied for our selves, whose life we will love as we love ours.

According to the Jewish Tradition this one may be, in the first place, a brother or a member of our family or a relative or, looking a little wider it can be a member of our own religion.

One who must share with me race, blood, and religion, even nationality ... but not wider than that.

"Neighbour" is defined in different ways by different beliefs and philosophies. According to the various criteria, the nationalist, or the religious, or the political one, etc....

"Who is my neighbour?" from our Christian view? How has Jesus explained it in this parable?

Two points merit our attention in the answer of Jesus, in defining Neighbour.

The first point is this condition, that: Neighbour demands Love. Love shown in a practical way, by deeds of mercy. Love extends our responsibility beyond ourselves. Love cannot ignore our neighbour's needs or difficulties. Love is forced by its nature to involve itself in the problems of others. The beloved neighbour moves the lover to share and feel with him both happiness and distress. Neighbourliness means compassion.

The second point is the new way to acquire neighbourliness, given her by Jesus. The previous way of being a neighbour before Christ, and the usual one, is that we inherit, and have bonds relationship that exists without any choice on our part. But Jesus is talking, in this parable, of another way: " Go and show..." neighbourliness by love and mercy. Our neighbour, for Jesus, is one whom we go towards by love and charity. Neighbourliness is something we want to have, and not only what does exist already. The various ways, by which different people build their manner of relationship can lead to love, but sometimes may become harmful. e.g. The fraternal love in the case of Moses and Aaron was a beneficial relationship. On the contrary, the fraternal relationship in the case of Cain and Abel was very harmful because it lacked Love.

In Christianity anyone is able to be our neighbour when freely we go on to love him. This is why Christian man can find, even in one's enemy a neighbour.

In other words every one can be one possibility or an occasion, and he is able to be our neighbour; in the hope that we will go toward him with love. Every one must be already our neighbour or a potential neighbour.

Love has many motives, such as blood, patriotism, religion, and so on, but Christian love has its unique motive i.e. God. As God loves all humankind we must generously imitate Him.

The only bonds, which can be the real motive of neighbourliness, is Love, by mercy. So who is unable to receive this divine gift? Compassion is the only Christian way to deal with others. Christian love and compassion do not distinguish one from another.

Love looks out, goes out of us, and seeks in the other his happiness. In fact, it is as St. Seraphim of Sarov calls him " My Joy".

"Go and show mercy on him", go, this is the how we tell who is my neighbour and who is not yet, towards whom we have already gone, or we love not yet.

Amen