

Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 13-14, 2019

Readings: Deuteronomy 30: 10-14; Colossians 1: 15-20; Luke 10:25-37

Preacher: Sr. Barbara Moore RSM

We have this weekend the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan.

This parable is so very familiar that we can almost recite it from memory. Amy-Jill Levine invites us to try to hear this story through the ears and hearts of Jesus' 1st Century audience. His audience understood the term "neighbor" to mean "someone like them or who lived near them." Jesus was about to expand that definition. In fact, he expands it to "love of enemies."

Robbers attacked, stripped the victim, and wounded him, "leaving him half dead." Note we have more than one engaged in this violence—"robbers." The Jewish Law required the priest and the Levite to attend to the victim. Christians have used the "purity" laws to excuse their behavior, but that may not have been what Jesus' listeners thought. Perhaps they avoided the victim because they feared the same violence the poor fellow experienced. One conclusion the early church interpreters have used is one that condemns the Jews in this situation.

Jesus surprises his listeners by using a wealthy Samaritan as the hero in the story. Scholars tell us of the long history of antipathy between these two peoples who at one time had the same roots. We easily use the title, "The Good Samaritan," but it had the same impact in the 1st Century as these words might have for people in the 21st Century—"The good Muslim," "The good immigrant," "The good LGBTQ person," or the "Good Black man," or "The good enemy." *In Short Stories by Jesus*, Levine notes, "Can we finally agree that it is better to acknowledge the humanity and the potential to do good in the enemy, rather than to choose death?"

Parables usually contain a surprise and this one does not disappoint. The "hated" one "came near," "had compassion," "bound the victim's wounds," "lifted him to

his animal,” “brought him to an inn,” and “cared for him,” “promised payment” and his “return.” The actions of this “hated” one were breathtaking. In a real sense he was living out the words of our first reading. “If only you would heed the voice of the Lord...and keep (God’s) commandments...They are near to you, already on your mouths and in your hearts, you have only to carry (them) out.”

What might be the message for us this weekend? Who have we judged, condemned and ignored? How have we accepted the violence they experience? I think of refugees who seek asylum here and around the world. How does our treatment of them and others match up to the lessons of this parable? The words of today’s psalm are powerful and contain a lesson for all of us. “For the Lord hears the poor, and God’s own who are in bonds, God spurns not.”