

Sunday 15-C6 homily by Fr. Gabor

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan touches upon one of the most important questions of our life as believers: do you only know the Law or you both know it and put it into practice by way of following your heart?

Jesus tells this parable of the Good Samaritan to a lawyer who does believe in the Law, the Ten Commandments, but Jesus reminds him that it is not enough to know the Law; you also have to put it into practice without picking and choosing whom you help. This reminded me of my past life when I refused to reach out to certain people, like young beggars, thinking that they should go and work, not considering even to talk to them to find out about how they got into this situation.

At the same time Jesus makes a very important point that what matters to God is not how clever and knowledgeable you are about the Law, but whether you have listened to your heart's voice and acted upon it, because if you do so you will automatically fulfill the word of the Law as well, just like the Samaritan did who helped this injured man, because he listened to the voice and movement of his heart that moved him towards compassion.

Jesus' story also makes it very clear that prioritising human made religious traditions, such as not touching an injured person lest you become unclean, over the Law which commands to love God and neighbour, and over the voice of your heart, is absolutely wrong. Those who do so are people of the letter, and not people of the heart. Jesus speaks up against this morality here and also in Mark's Gospel chapter 7 verses 6-9 where He says: "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules." You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.' And he continues, 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions' (NIV). This is what happens in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

So there is something wrong here. Why do they behave like this? Why do they worship God only with their lips and not with their hearts? It is because they are addicted to traditions; they are not free to follow their hearts' voice; they live in accord with their own human expectations and ideals, which keeps them in a kind of spiritual bondage that takes away their freedom to love everyone in need with God's merciful love. I wonder if you can recognise this sort of attitude in yourself as well? Think of the people whom you help; how many of them are for example people whom you don't like?

So as soon as you lose focus of the most important thing; the voice of the Father through the Law, through others and through your heart, and start focusing on yourself, on your own agenda, your preferences, your own expectations, your own self-made rules (like the priests and Levites), your own image, your own reputation

you quickly develop bondages to your own self-interest, and these bondages will rule your life, your actions; and you end up with picking and choosing whom you help and support. That's double-standard.

Jesus also makes an important point that you don't have to know the Law in order to fulfill it.

Why? Simply because the Law is written in everyone's heart, whether you are a believer or not. Read what the book of Deuteronomy says in our first reading: 'the Word [ie. the Law] is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart...'
Our loving heavenly Father put His Law of love into our hearts, namely into the centre of our being. The good Samaritan is not a Jew, so he may not even know the Law, the Ten commandments, but he knows the voice of his own heart, the voice of our compassionate Father, and acts upon it. St. Paul says in Romans 2:13-16:
¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness ...' So do not feel comfortable in your chair thinking that because you go to church you will be safe when it comes to judgement day. Jesus reminds you in Mt 7:21 (NIV): 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father...'

So knowing the Law is very important, because eventually it is the Law of God's love, but only to the extent that it is a reference point when you question if your heart's voice or movement comes from God or not. If it agrees with what the Law of love says, then act upon your heart. God speaks in the language of love; in the language of patience, kindness, truth, trust, hope, perseverance and compassion as St. Paul says in 1 Cor 13: 4-7. So let's not be a people who honour God only with their lips, and their **hearts** are far from God (Mt 15:8), but always strive to be a people who "Love the Lord our God with all our **heart** and with all our soul and with all our mind' (Mt 22:37) and your neighbour as yourself (Mk 12:31).