

Unleash Love: A Reflection on the Good Samaritan

John Paul II, Salvifici Doloris 28

“In a word, then, a Good Samaritan is *one who brings help in suffering*, whatever its nature may be. Help which is, as far as possible, effective. One puts their whole heart into it, nor do they spare material means. We can say that one gives themselves, their very “I”, opening this “I” to the other person. Here we touch upon one of the key-points of all Christian anthropology. One cannot “fully find themselves except through a sincere gift of themselves”(92). A Good Samaritan *is the person capable of exactly such a gift of self.*

Following the parable of the Gospel, we could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order *to unleash love in the human person*, that unselfish gift of one's “I” on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer. The world of human suffering unceasingly calls for, so to speak, another world: the world of human love; and in a certain sense one owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in their heart and actions. The person who is a “neighbour” cannot indifferently pass by the suffering of another: this in the name of fundamental human solidarity, still more in the name of love of neighbour. One must “stop”, “sympathize”, just like the Samaritan of the Gospel parable. The parable in itself expresses *a deeply Christian truth*, but one that at the same time is very universally human. It is not without reason that, also in ordinary speech, any activity on behalf of the suffering and needy is called “Good Samaritan” work.

In the course of the centuries, this *activity* assumes organized *institutional forms* and constitutes a field of work in the respective *professions*. How much there is of “the Good Samaritan” in the profession of the doctor, or the nurse, or others similar! Considering its “evangelical” content, we are inclined to think here of a vocation rather than simply a profession. And the institutions which from generation to generation have performed “Good Samaritan” service have developed and specialized even further in our times. This undoubtedly proves that people today pay ever greater and closer attention to the sufferings of their neighbour, seek to understand those sufferings and deal with them with ever greater skill. They also have an ever greater capacity and specialization in this area. In view of all this, we can say that the parable of the Samaritan of the Gospel has become *one of the essential elements of moral culture and universally human civilization*. And thinking of all those who by their knowledge and ability provide many



PRAYER

kinds of service to their suffering neighbour, we cannot but offer them words of thanks and gratitude.”

Let us pray,

May we continue to emulate the Good Samaritan in our daily work. May we be mindful of the suffering of those whom we serve, even in the midst of our challenges. And, may we strengthen the institutions that carry on this Good Samaritan Ministry from generation to generation.

Amen