**Thursday.**

**Mercy and Love**



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 **Reflecting on:**

**“Love In Action”**

**Readings:**

 Luke 10: 25-37

**Other Readings:**

 Deuteronomy 30: 10-14; Psalm 69: 13, 16, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36; Colossians 1: 15-20

**1. Lectio:** A teacher wants to trap Jesus with a question. Jesus sees straight through him and asks him to answer his own question. The teacher gives the correct answer that sums up the Jewish teaching: loving God and loving our neighbour.

 But the teacher hasn’t achieved his objective of making himself look cleverer than Jesus so he asks another question, *“Who is my neighbour?”* Jesus responds with a powerful parable – the Good Samaritan, as we know it today.

 Jesus contrasts the responses of three people when they encounter a man at the side of the road who has been robbed and beaten up. The first two, a priest and a Levite were in positions of religious authority. They would have sought to obey the law in every detail. But here they fail to obey one of the most important commandments.

 It is the third person, a Samaritan, who acts like a good neighbour and helps this man. To appreciate the full impact of this parable we need to understand the longstanding animosity that existed here. The Jews looked down on Samaritans and considered them ‘unclean’, no better than Gentiles. Jesus uses a non-Jew, a despised foreigner, to show this religious teacher how to live out Jewish teaching!

 With this parable Jesus makes it clear that we should always be neighbours to any fellow human being who needs help. We may never have met them before, they may be from a different racial and religious background, but nonetheless we are still their neighbours.

**2. Meditatio:**

**\*** Consider the reasons the priest and the Levite might have had for not helping the man. Do you see any of these attitudes in yourself? What needs to motivate our actions towards others?

**\*** What do we learn from this passage about why we should help others in need?

**\*** Is it significant that Jesus says ‘do this’ (verses 28 and 37)? What light does James 2: 14-17 shed on this?

**\*** Think about what it means for you to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.

**3. Oratio:**

Let Psalm 69 guide your prayers for those you love and for those you see in need.

**4. Contemplatio:**

Read Colossians 1: 15-20 slowly several times. Then take a couple of lines at a time and contemplate the meaning of the magnificence of Christ revealed here.

* **Prayer of the Day**

Lord, my God,

I grieve for what I have done and left undone.

I grieve that I made myself disordered

 and my life unfocused.

I grieve over sin’s horror on the earth.

 and the vanity and emptiness of human affairs.

Please draw me to your Holy Self.

Amen

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 **Reflecting on:**

**“A Lesson in Mercy – Forgiveness”**

**Reading:**

 John 8: 1-11

**Other Readings:**

 Isaiah 43: 16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3: 8-14

**1. Lectio:** In John 8: 1-11, we read an example of Jesus’ forgiveness and mercy. A woman has been caught in adultery. The Pharisees, knowing Jesus’ compassion for sinners, take this opportunity to try and trap him.

 Picture the scene. Jesus is teaching in the temple, the holiest place for the Jews which Jesus described as ‘my Father’s house’. A crowd of people are gathered around listening to what he has to say

 A group of Pharisees and teachers of Law arrive and make a woman stand before Jesus and the crowd. They declare that she was caught in adultery and that the punishment required by the Law of Moses is death by stoning (Deuteronomy 22: 22-24). Then comes the loaded question, “Now what do you say?” They pretend to accuse only the woman, but they actually looking for a chance to accuse (and try) Jesus.

 The man with whom she was committing adultery is not mentioned, nor is her husband. The atmosphere must have been electric. It was quite literally a matter of life and death. All eyes shift from the woman, whose life hangs in the balance, to Jesus. What will he say?

 Jesus bends down and writes on the ground. What did he write? Why? Perhaps Jesus wanted to draw attention away from the terrified woman; perhaps he was considering his answer. John gives no explanation.

 Jesus answer is masterful. He is well aware of the intended trap. He silences the accusers without contradicting the Law or condoning the sin. The woman is eventually left on her own before Jesus. As he was without sin he could have carried out the punishment but he tells her she is free to go. He wants to give her the opportunity to repent and tell her not to sin again.

**2. Meditatio:**

**\*** Compare the way the Pharisees treated this woman with the way Jesus treated her. Consider their actions and motives. How did they differ? Were there any points of agreement?

**\*** Imagine yourself firstly as one of the Pharisees, then as this frightened woman. What impact do you think this encounter would have had on you?

**\*** What can we learn from this passage about our attitudes to our own behaviour and our attitudes to others?

**3. Oratio:**

Thank God for his grace and mercy. He knows our weaknesses and when we sin, we can come to him to be forgiven and restored. Ask God to deepen your appreciation of these wonderfully undeserved gifts.

Pray through Psalm 126 and give thanks for ‘What marvels the Lord has worked for us!’

Ask the Holy Spirit reveal any attitudes in you that should change.

**4. Contemplatio:**

Consider the images of water in Isaiah 43 and Psalm 126. Let God reveal its life-sustaining, refreshing and cleaning properties. Now relate this to God’s forgiveness and grace in your life.

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