

In the Gospel this week, Luke 10:25-37, we find a scholar of the law putting Jesus to the test by asking, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responds by confirming the law of God which states, “*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*” And He said, “*Do this and you will live.*” Next, the scholar, in order to “justify himself,” asks, “And who is my neighbor?” This is an important question because for a Jewish scholar of the law at the time of Jesus not all “neighbors” would be treated the same. For example, it would be a scandal for him to even talk to a Samaritan or be the friend of a tax collector. These people were despised as enemies and traitors to their customs and religion. Surely, we are not obliged to love them as ourselves! Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan:



“A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

So, according to Jesus, who is our neighbor whom we are to love as ourselves? Clearly, our neighbor is not defined by location (the victim was from Jerusalem and the “neighbor” was a traveler from Samaria). Neither is it defined by nationality, religious affiliation, political affiliation or even how much we like each other. In the parable, it was a Samaritan traveler who was the true neighbor to the Jewish victim. Why? Because the Good Samaritan was moved with compassion and, even though he did not know who the victim was, by his deeds he loved him as himself. Thus, he fulfilled the law of God by loving his neighbor as himself. So, who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is any and every human being who is in need of our mercy and compassion. The law says we are to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, with all our being, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves. When we love God as we should, as He deserves to be loved, we in turn must love what God loves, and come to find out, He loves everyone He created in His own image, even our enemies. Therefore, we desire mercy, healing, grace, salvation, saving Truth, authentic Love, liberation from sin, conversion from darkness, and ultimately, union with God for everyone we meet. In the parable, the Good Samaritan treated the victim with mercy and thus served as his neighbor; Jesus calls us to “Go and do likewise.”

Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



Saint Camillus de Lellis

Feast Day July 18

Born May 25, 1550

Died July 14, 1614

Beatified 1742 by Pope Benedict XIV

Canonized 1746 by Pope Benedict XIV

Camillus de Lellis was born in the small Italian town of Bocchianico. His early years were marked by hardship: his mother died when he was a child and his father, a professional soldier, neglected him leaving Camillus to fend for himself. At 17 he was afflicted with a disease of his leg that remained with him for life. Camillus was drawn to the adventurous life of a soldier. He fought for the Venetians against the Turks, but his military career was cut short by his leg wound. The wound forced him to seek treatment at the San Giacomo Hospital in Rome. During his repeated hospital stays Camillus was appalled by the poor quality of care and the lack of compassion shown to patients.

Humanly speaking, Camillus was not a likely candidate for sainthood. Camillus's early adulthood was marred by a gambling addiction which left him penniless by the age of twenty-four. After losing everything he accepted work at a Capuchin friary (a reform branch of the Franciscans) in Manfredonia, Italy. There, moved by a sermon from the superior, Camillus experienced a profound conversion. He attempted to join the Capuchin order but his persistent leg wound prevented him from being professed. Despite this setback Camillus returned to San Giacomo Hospital where his dedication and hard work eventually led to his appointment as superintendent.

Camillus's experiences in the hospital convinced him that a religious order dedicated to the care of the sick was needed. With the guidance and encouragement of his friend and confessor, Saint Philip Neri, Camillus pursued studies for the priesthood and was ordained at the age of thirty-four. In 1585 he founded the Ministers of the Sick, a religious community devoted to caring for the ill and dying. This congregation would later be known as the Order of Saint Camillus, or the Camillians.

The Camillians took a unique fourth vow, "to serve the sick even with danger to one's own life," which set them apart from other religious orders. Their ministry was not limited to hospitals. They also cared for prisoners, those affected by plague, and the dying in private homes. In Naples, Camillus and his companions went aboard plague-stricken galleys that were forbidden to enter the harbor risking their lives to care for the sick. Two of their number perished from the disease but their courage inspired many others.

Camillus insisted on high standards of cleanliness and technical competence among his followers. He also introduced innovations such as continuing prayers for the dying for fifteen minutes after apparent death to ensure that no one was buried alive. During times of famine and pestilence in Rome, Camillus and his brothers went through the streets carrying the suffering into their homes and nursing them with tenderness and courage.

Reflection: Saints are created by God. Parents must indeed nurture the faith in their children; husbands and wives must cooperate to deepen their baptismal grace; friends must support each other. But all human effort is only the dispensing of divine power. We must all try as if everything depended on us but only the power of God can fulfill the plan of God—to make us like himself.