



April 2024

Theme: Passion for Mercy

Scripture Passage: Luke 10:25-37

Despite its popularity the true scandal of the parable of the good samaritan is often lost on us in our current time. A more modern telling of this story might go like this: there once was a border patrol officer who was driving through the desert when suddenly his car broke down. Knowing that he was in a dangerous situation he radioed for help, but, for whatever reason, help never came. Days later a group of immigrants cautiously approached his car - finding him half dead. They took pity on him and gave him water from what little they themselves had for their journey. They carried him to the nearest border checkpoint, not quite knowing what fate would meet them when they arrived there.

Now which of these was a neighbor to the man who was in trouble? Jesus asked his students that day. They answered "The one who showed him mercy."

This story is not just about strangers helping strangers. It's a story about power, about border crossing - it's about challenging our preconceived notions of who is in and who is out.

A few months back, we were reminded that passion is not just a word that describes our favorite hobbies or positive feelings, but passion can be an uncomfortable stirring of emotion too. Like the story of the Good Samaritan, it can scandalize our assumptions or our preconceived notions. So, if we pray for a Passion for a Life of Mercy this month, let us pray for discomfort - discomfort in the face of violence, discomfort in the face of abuse, discomfort in the face of nihilistic political actors and discomfort at the callous comfort we too often try to keep for ourselves at the expense of everyone else.

I'm reminded of a Franciscan Benediction which we can use as our prayer for mercy this month:

May God bless us with discomfort

At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships

So that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger

At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of God's creations

So that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears

To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war,

So that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and

To turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with just enough foolishness

To believe that we can make a difference in the world,
So that we can do what others claim cannot be done:
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and all our neighbors who are poor. Amen.

Prayer for the Month

On one occasion, an expert in the law tested Jesus by asking, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded by asking him what is written in the Law, and the expert answered with the commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Jesus affirmed that the correct answer was to do this and live. Wanting to justify himself, the expert then asked Jesus who his neighbor was. In reply, Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan: A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by robbers who left him half dead. A priest and a Levite saw the man but chose to pass by on the other side. However, a Samaritan, upon seeing the man, took pity on him. He bandaged his wounds, brought him to an inn, and took care of him, even leaving money with the innkeeper to cover further expenses, promising to repay any additional costs on his return. Jesus concluded by asking which of the three was a neighbor to the robbed man, to which the expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus then instructed him to go and do likewise. Amen.

Prayer Queues or Breath Prayers for the Month

- April 7 – May God bless us with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that we may live from deep within our hearts.

- April 14 – May God bless us with anger
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of God's creations
So that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

- April 21 – May God bless us with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war,
So that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and
To turn their pain into joy.

- April 28 – May God bless us with just enough foolishness
To believe that we can make a difference in the world,
So that we can do what others claim cannot be done:
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and
all our neighbors who are poor.
Amen.



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