

# HOMILY 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## July 9-10, 2022

There was a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi and a Protestant minister and they were all asked the same question: *“When does human life begin?”* The Catholic priest answered: *“Life begins at conception.”* The Jewish rabbi answered: *“Life begins at birth.”* The Protestant minister answered: *“Life begins when the last child goes off to college and the dog dies.”* All kidding aside, we all know that the Catholic Church teaches that life begins at conception. I think a slightly different question is asked of Jesus in the Gospel Reading today. *“When does eternal life begin?”* The Kingdom of Heaven begins in this world, and I think it begins when we love our neighbor.

A scholar of the law asks Jesus, *“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* and *“Who is my neighbor?”* Jesus answers his question through the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now the priest and the Levite would clearly be considered his neighbor. They were both Jewish and religious leaders. They were part of his tribe. They would certainly be expected to help, but they did not. The Samaritan did help. Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies, but the Samaritan helped the Jew. He helped him in a very personal way. He cleaned and bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn on his own animal and paid for his care and lodging. How many of us would do this for a stranger, let alone a bitter enemy? But this is what Jesus is calling us to do. The scholar of the law was hoping to limit his responsibility; but according to Jesus, our responsibility is endless. We are called to show loving kindness to everyone.

We were created in the image and likeness of God, and I think God created us to be kind. I believe it is part of our very nature to be kind. I recently read a study from the United Kingdom on kindness. The research showed that when we experience or witness acts of kindness, we are much more likely to be kind to others. Kindness is contagious. When we perform acts of kindness, the reward system in our brain lights up, which feels good and causes us to look for more opportunities to be kind. While kindness can cost us, we experience a sense of reward in parts of our brain that motivates us to be kind over and over again.

Being kind to our friends and family is definitely important; but based upon the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is calling us to perform acts of kindness that cost us. In the parable, the Good Samaritan is

kind to someone in another town, someone he did not know; and bandaging the wounds of someone you do not know is pretty up close and personal. Maybe we need to get out of our comfort zone. Maybe we need to reach out beyond Livonia. Jesus is telling us that everyone is our neighbor. What do you feel called to do?

Our Parish Social Worker is planning to arrange some service projects that will include different levels of involvement. For example, St. Edith is going to be volunteering one Sunday at the soup kitchen at Crossroads of Michigan, which is located in Detroit near Henry Ford Hospital's main campus. We will need people to donate the money to buy the food, people to shop for the food, people to cook the soup and make the sandwiches and people to serve the food. They have inside dining and carry out. They serve about 900 meals each Sunday.

We are also partnering with Samaritas, which is a nonprofit that provides services for refugees. One of the projects is that you sponsor a room where a refugee family will live temporarily. We would paint the room, buy furniture for the room including beds and put some artwork on the walls so they feel welcome; and when they find permanent housing, they take it all with them to give them a fresh start. Then you start all over again with a new family. Doesn't this sound like a great program? They also have donated furniture from IKEA and need people to put it together. Patti will be looking for people to help coordinate these projects, so give it some thought. Is this what God is calling you to do? I think we were created for loving kindness, and it is contagious. So let's start a loving kindness pandemic!

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim