

Thought for the Week
14th July 2019
15th Sunday in Ordinary time

I often find it challenging to hear a very familiar parable, such as this Sunday's Gospel of the Good Samaritan, afresh. I know it so well... what can it possibly be telling me that I haven't already heard?

I turn to the English seventeenth-century mystic, the Venerable Mary Ward, and wonder how such a parable might have influenced her thinking and the development of her key values of justice, freedom and integrity.

Justice is surely about being in a right relationship with God and neighbour – one can hardly be in a right relationship with God if one isn't in a right relationship with neighbour, as Jesus explicitly says. Although the Good Samaritan doesn't mention God, his attitude to the other man in the story tells us that he is moved to compassion by his plight.

Freedom not to be held back by fear... The Good Samaritan has an inner freedom that allows him to lay to one side the age-old enmity between Jews and Samaritans and the knowledge that he is despised by Jews, and to respond to the humanity of the other person.

Integrity here is deeper than a mere 'good deed' and tells us something fundamental about the disposition of the person who seeks not only to do good, but to be good. As Mary Ward said of her sisters,

'members of this company shall act not out of fear, but solely from love.'

The Good Samaritan displayed the God-given graces of love, justice, freedom and integrity. Can I pray to receive these graces too? Where am I called to lay aside fear and prejudice and to see God in the other person, one who is so different from me in background, faith, appearance, values?

What parable would Jesus tell me about being a good neighbour?