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Angelus: who is my neighbour?

Vatican City, 10 July 2016 – At midday today, as on every Sunday, the Pope appeared at the window of his study to pray the Angelus with the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square and to reflect on the liturgical texts of the day. This time it was the parable of the "Good Samaritan, narrated in the Gospel of St. Luke. This parable indicates a style of life whose centre of gravity, Francis remarked, is not ourselves but the others, with their difficulties, whom we encounter in our journey and who call to us. "And when the plight of others does not call out to us, it means that something does not work; something in that heart is not Christian".

Jesus uses this parable in the dialogue with a doctor of the Law, with regard to the double commandment that allows one to enter into eternal life: to love God with all one's heart, and to love one's neighbour like oneself. "Yes", replies the doctor of the Law, "And who is my neighbour?" "We too might ask ourselves this question", said the Holy Father. "Who is my neighbour? Who must I love like myself? My relatives? My friends? My compatriots? Those who share the same religion? Who is my neighbour?"

Christ's answer is the parable of the good Samaritan, that of a man who on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is assailed by brigands, assaulted and abandoned. First a priest passes along the same road, then a Levite; neither of them, seeing the injured man, stop but instead carry on their way without helping. Then there passes a Samaritan, a man from the region of Samaria whose inhabitants were ill-regarded by the Jews as they did not observe the true religion. The Samaritan is moved by the plight of the injured man, and stops to dress his wounds. He takes him to an inn and the following day pays the innkeeper for the room where he is to stay until he recovers. At this point, Jesus asks the doctor of the Law, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" The doctor of the law answers, "The one who showed him mercy."

"In this way Jesus completely changes the initial perspective of the doctor of the Law", explained Francis. "I must not categorise others to decide who is my neighbour and who isn't. It is for me to decide to be or not to be a neighbour ... to the person I encounter and who is in need of help, even if he or she is a stranger or even hostile. Jesus concludes, 'You go, and do likewise', ... and he repeats it to each one of us. Be a neighbour to the brother or sister we see in difficulty. ... Do good works, do not merely say good words that are then dispersed in the wind. ... And through good works, that we do for our neighbour with love and good cheer, our faith germinates and bears fruit. Let us ask ourselves, is our faith fruitful? Does our faith produce good works? Or is it barren, and

therefore more dead than alive? Am I a neighbour, or do I simply walk on by? Am I one of those who choose people according to my taste?"

"It is good to ask ourselves these questions and to do so frequently, because in the end we will be judged for our works of mercy", underlined the Holy Father. "The Lord will be able to say to us, 'Do you remember that time on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho? I was that man, half dead by the roadside. Do you remember? I was that hungry child. Do you remember? I was that migrant whom so many wanted to send away. I was those lonely grandparents, abandoned in a rest home. I was that sick person, alone in hospital, whom no-one came to visit'".

"May the Virgin Mary help us to walk the path of love, generous love towards others, the way of the Good Samaritan. May she help us to live the principal commandment that Christ left us. This is the way to eternal life".
