

## 15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME: "ALL LIVES MATTER"

July 10, 2016—It is perhaps the most important question of all time, the one we ask ourselves throughout the course of our lives and perhaps the one that is the very reason we are here today: *What must I do to inherit eternal life?*

The scholar who posed this eternal question to Our Blessed Lord in today's Gospel knew full well the ancient answers provided by his Jewish faith. The 613 rules of the Mosaic Law with 365 "*Thou Shalt Nots ...*" and 248 "*Thou Shalt ...*" that should do the trick. But in case the list was not long enough, the scholar wanted just one more. He wanted to hear this famous and inspiring Rabbi's list of those who we should treat with respect, with compassion and with love.

As usual, the Divine Teacher would have no part of any of this, and in an instant turns the question around and tells the timeless parable of the Good Samaritan. A parable that we all know so well and that is one of charity, of kindness and of overwhelming compassion mixed with great generosity. (Luke 10: 25-37)

The questioning scholar and the listeners around him that day must have said and thought the same thing that we do today—can it really be as simple as that?

Can eternal life come from rendering kindness to those in need, reaching out in love to others—even our enemies—and from treating with respect all those who cross our paths? The answer then and now is **yes!**

My friends, this parable is a timely reminder to us as a nation grieving the senseless deaths of five of Dallas' finest and praying for their families and the many officers wounded last Thursday evening (n.b. July 7, 2016). The very men and women protecting those protesters for a proposed peaceful march were gunned down in a racial and hateful attack that makes us all shiver.

Our nation has reached a new low of division when groups organize to hate other groups and sworn officers risk their lives just for putting on uniforms and doing their jobs. In the many recent events of violence against our police, there seems to be a recurring theme: that they are somehow people who wish to harm us when, in fact, the opposite is true. They are our neighbors, with some sitting in these pews right now and others patrolling the streets around this church and our city. Their children attend our schools, their parents and spouses pray for them daily and worry about them around the clock—especially now in light of these most recent events—and every one of them deserves our respect, admiration and love. They are the Good Samaritans of our day and this weekend we should rename this parable—for that hated Samaritan and sworn enemy of the Jews for centuries was used as a powerful teaching tool by this inspiring Savior. So today the Good Samaritan parable becomes the All Lives Matter parable!

Maybe it is me, but there appears to be a silent majority of political voices from the White House to our State House. There is a lack of someone—anyone—rendering counsel to citizens and people of all races and creeds that when a police officer tells you to do something, you do it. That is the respect that he or she deserves since they do a very dangerous job, as witnessed last Thursday in Dallas when—in an instant—good lives ended and others were forever changed.

I remember my mother's wise and firm words to me and my brother when we were children: if the policeman comes to the door, you are going with him. So we behaved. He never came and we never went.

I have been the proud Chaplain for the Warwick Police Department since 1994 and have had the privilege to witness up close and almost daily the difficult job that police officers have. And these jobs are only getting more difficult. I've seen their kindness and patience with the confused, the firm hand of order when danger is imminent and the bottomless well of goodness that comes from deep within police officers. I've also seen the behavior of the public that often borders on sinister, and the disrespect shown to police that is never warranted toward anyone—never mind to sworn officers of the law. The police are the very individuals meant to keep evil at bay and make sure that those members of our society who are bad (and there are some who are bad) do not hurt the innocent, the orderly and the good.

And so this weekend, and in the days following, let us recall those timeless words of this familiar Gospel. Let us heed the wise and divine counsel of the Savior to a questioning scholar, and treat all people who cross our paths with respect, dignity and love. Then, this parable will be more than a lesson preached but a lesson learned and one that is truly lived!

God love you!