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Members of the humanitarian aid organization Tucson Samaritans count used water containers in May 2018 and replace them with full ones for migrants trying to cross the border in the Sonoran Desert northeast of Ajo, Arizona. (GSR photo/Peter Tran)



by Thomas Gumbleton

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Perhaps you've noticed that this liturgy returns us to what we call the ordinary Sundays of the year. The last time we celebrated an ordinary Sunday was the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Then we went through Lent, Holy Week, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent (of the Holy Spirit) on Pentecost, and finally we completed all of that and now we're back to ordinary time. It's quite unusual, in a sense, that where we begin at ordinary time is, in a way, back where we were almost a year ago.

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 30, 2019

1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Psalm 16

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Luke 9:51-62

We're on the way to Jerusalem with Jesus; it's his final trip in his life. It will take us through the rest of the ordinary time of the year. As we follow Jesus, it's important each week now to listen. We're disciples and a disciple is one who learns by listening. And then we're to act, to follow Jesus.

So we'll be instructed week after week, if we listen carefully, how to be the disciple that each one of us is called to be. Today, we get a very important lesson to start with.

In the Gospel, you remember (you just heard it), Jesus was going to go into the Samaritan village to stay overnight, at least. The Samaritan said, "No, you don't come in here." Samaritans hated Jews and Jews hated Samaritans.

James and John become very righteous, "We'll tear that building down. We'll burn it to the ground, call down fire from heaven."

Jesus said, "No." He understands the deep feelings of the Samaritans, the history that has gone on now for hundreds of years — fault on both sides. There has to become reconciliation and that doesn't happen by destroying the people on the other side of this division.

So Jesus rebukes James and John and quietly goes on his way. This is a lesson for us about how Jesus teaches us to bring peace into our lives and into our world. There are times when there are differences among us, of course, sometimes very difficult differences even within our families or in our community, but certainly within our world. Jesus is showing us you don't resolve those differences by turning to violence, intensifying your hatred, and trying to destroy the other person or the other country in worldwide situations.

Yet, just a matter of less than three weeks ago, our country was within 10 minutes of another war. The president had given the order to bomb Iran. It was only 10 minutes before that would have happened that he reversed the order. We come so close to using violence like that.

It certainly is not the way of Jesus. We must become a people who hear what Jesus says and act on it, reach out and try to understand where am I wrong, where are they wrong, and come together and reconcile. That's the only way that we will eventually bring peace into our world on that large scale of world peace.

But it's also, in fact, the only way we can bring deep peace and joy and love into our family life, into our community. We must try to have that spirit of understanding, try to see the hurt on the other side, try to see where we have been wrong or where we have been wronged and then come to reconciliation.

That's the way of love, the way of nonviolence, probably the most extraordinary of all the teachings of Jesus where he tells us to love one another as I have loved you without limit, without condition. Certainly, this is part of the conversion we must undergo, all of us, in trying to follow Jesus.

I suggest one other area of deep concern. I'm sure every one of us is aware of that picture of desperation — the father with his daughter clinging to him washing up on our shores, trying to flee violence and poverty, trying to find a life for himself and his

family, just as many of us did generations ago when our families were immigrants and, yet, we have pushed those people away.

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I became aware just a week or so ago, through a friend, of a person who was near the border of our country on our side bringing water and food to people who had crossed over and had become lost in the desert and were dying.

He was arrested and put on trial because it was a crime to give water to a dying person, according to our law. How can that be? He, in fact, went to trial twice, but the jurors were decent enough people who refused to convict him of any crime. He was reaching out to save a fellow human being. That's not a crime; that's an act of love. It's a way of following Jesus.

We'll hear shortly, as Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem, a story that we've heard many times, a story of the Good Samaritan where someone was almost battered to death by robbers.

A priest and a Levite walk by and pay no attention. A Samaritan comes along and takes care of the person. Jesus tells that story to indicate who is our neighbor when Jesus says to love your neighbor.

Who is our neighbor? Anyone who is in need, and certainly and especially in desperate need. That's our neighbor and that's one we must love. These are the kinds of things that make us disciples of Jesus.

If we listen and follow what he guides us to do, we become true disciples. We will be with him and he with us to bring reconciliation, to bring his love into our world. That's what it means, again, to follow Jesus — to listen to his word, to watch how he acts, and do the same.

Editor's note: *This homily was given June 30 at St. Ambrose Church, Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are posted weekly to NCRonline.org. Sign up here to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.*