

November 26, 2006

## Second Sunday of Advent

Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, which many Christians have seen as a parable of man's Fall and Redemption. Such an interpretation is usually elaborated in three steps.

First, there is the story of the Fall, concerning which we are told, "A man was *going down* from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he *fell* among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead." This man started in Jerusalem, we observe. He began his history in the garden place of God's presence. But he did not stay there. He made a deliberate decision to *go down* on a journey. No one told him to go. He made the decision on his own, as an assertion of his independence. "Man in honor, did not abide," says the Psalmist; "He became like the beasts that perish" (Psalms 49:12).

These robbers did not kill the fallen man completely. They left him, says the Sacred Text, *half dead*. Even fallen, he did not suffer total depravity. That is to say, there was still some chance for him, though he had no way of saving himself from his terrible predicament. By this man's disobedience, in fact, sin entered the world, and by sin death. Indeed, death reigned already in his mortal flesh. How shall we describe this poor man's plight except that he was "alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world"? (Ephesians 2:12) He had been left half dead, Holy Scripture says, and there was no help for him in this world.

Along came a priest and then a Levite, men representing the Mosaic Law, but they had to pass by the fallen wayfarer, because by the works of the Law is no man justified. The priest and the Levite were hastening to the Temple, in order to offer repeatedly the same sacrifices that could never take away sins. Indeed, matters were made even worse, because "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:3-4)

Second, a Samaritan, the Bible tells us, "as he journeyed, came to where the man was, and when he saw him, he had compassion." In the fullness of time, that is to say, God sent His Son to be a good neighbor to him who fell among the thieves. This Son, being in the form of God, did not think equality with God a thing to be seized, but He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. Indeed, this Son became an utter outcast--in short, a Samaritan, a person without respect or social standing. Although He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty we might become rich.

What was the first thing this Samaritan did for the man that fell among the thieves? He saw him, says the Bible. He looked upon the man in his misery. When Nathaniel was still under the fig tree, our Samaritan saw him. A certain paralytic lay beside the pool of Bethesda with an infirmity thirty-eight years, and our Samaritan saw him lying there. Showing Himself to be a good neighbor, this Samaritan, passing by, saw the man who was blind from birth. Blessed is he that falls under the gaze of our Samaritan. Such a one may say, "Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also have been known."

What did the Samaritan do for the man that fell among thieves? He washed him in the waters of Baptism, cleansing his wounds, and into those wounds he poured His grace in the form of anointing oil, the holy Chrism, and the Eucharistic wine to prevent infection. He gave the fallen man those Sacraments by which he was initiated into a renewed life in the Holy Spirit.

Our Samaritan did not leave beside the road this half-dead victim of the fall among thieves. On the contrary, "He set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him." And then he went away. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. This Samaritan is also the great high priest that entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. But even as He went away, He said to the inn keeper, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you."

And this promise brings us to the third point. Our Samaritan says to the innkeeper, "*when* I come again." He does not say, *if* I come again, but *when* I come again. There is no "if" about the return of this Samaritan. This same Samaritan, which is taken up from us into heaven, shall so come in like manner as we have seen him go into heaven. We solemnly confess, then, that He will come again in glory to judge the living the dead, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, apart from sin unto salvation.

All of history is given significance by the two visits of the Samaritan. Only those who abide in the inn, waiting the return of the Samaritan, really know the meaning of history. The inn is the house of history, the Church where innkeeper cares for the Samaritan's friends.

This parable does not describe that return of the Samaritan. It says simply "when I return." The parable leaves that return in the future. The story ends in the inn itself. It goes no further. The parable terminates in the place where the Samaritan would have his friends stay--at the inn. It is imperative for their souls' health that they remain within this inn, to which our Samaritan has sworn to return. In this inn, which has received the solemn promise of the Samaritan, His friends pass all their days, as in eagerness they await His sworn return. This hope they have as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which enters into that within the veil; Whither the

forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

©2006 Patrick Henry Reardon

**All Saints Orthodox Church  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**

4129 W. Newport Avenue / Chicago, IL 60641

Church Office: (773) 777-0749

<http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/>

**Father Patrick Henry Reardon, Pastor**

[phri@touchstonemag.com](mailto:phri@touchstonemag.com)

**Pastor's Daily Biblical Reflections:**

[www.touchstonemag.com/frpat.html](http://www.touchstonemag.com/frpat.html)

**Pastoral Ponderings:**

[http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/pastor/pastoral\\_ponderings.php](http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/pastor/pastoral_ponderings.php)