



## BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
July 13, 2025  
Sr. Belinda Monahan

Deut 30:10-14  
Col 1:15-20  
Luke 10:25-37

When I first looked at the readings for today, I was immediately delighted by the images of a loving God that they all provide. But I have to admit that what stood out to me was not something from the readings themselves, but a note on the Gospel in which this parable of the Good Samaritan is described as a moment in which “Jesus illustrates the superiority of love over legalism.”

Hmm...I thought, this sounds somewhat familiar.

Then I realized that the next section of the Gospel is the Martha and Mary story that we read every tenth of February. By this point, even “I” got the message. What does it mean to interpret these readings from the perspective of love over legalism?

The first place this led me was to the scholar of the law. His question is not based in genuine curiosity; he already knows the answer—in fact, he is the one who provides the answer when Jesus pushes him. He asks the question to “test” Jesus: to find out whether Jesus is the “right kind of person.” And he’ll know this not on the basis of what Jesus does, but on whether Jesus can answer the question correctly.

And the parable itself. The legal scholar almost certainly would have put himself in the place of the priest or the Levite—the two men who choose doing what is prescribed in the rules, rather than the neighborly thing. He might have recognized himself as the man who was robbed and beaten, but it is unlikely that he would have been able to put himself in the place of the Samaritan; he would have despised the Samaritan. Following the laws of his own time, even the idea of being helped by the Samaritan would probably have been repugnant to the scholar.

And this is the person that Jesus is holding up as the fulfillment of the law. This is the person who responds as a neighbor to the man who has been robbed and beaten? This is the person who is able to overlook the legalism that would not allow him to touch the man and to respond to his need in love? We don’t hear the reaction of the legal scholar to this parable, and I’m not sure we, for whom this parable is so familiar, can grasp the confusion that this parable would have caused the scholar.

For us, as Benedictines, of course, THE story of love over legalism is St. Scholastica. More than once when I have told the familiar story at vocation events in schools around the archdiocese, the teacher has given me something of a side-eye. Am I really teaching elementary school students that there is something more important than obeying the rules?

The first reading helps me out here. Love over legalism doesn’t lead to a free-for-all. The command that Moses enjoins on the Israelites isn’t a set of rules to be enforced from the outside, it is part of their very being. They need only act on it. It is, nevertheless, a command. Love calls us to action; love demands much of us; more, indeed, than a legalistic following of the law.

So as Gregory reminds us of Scholastica, “It was fitting that she who loved more was able to do more.” Today’s readings call us to write the commandment of love on our hearts; to practice seeing our neighbor in the most unexpected people and to allow the needs of those neighbors to lead us into action.