Columns
Social Justice



A stained glass window at St. Henry Catholic Church in St. Henry, Ohio, depicts Christ as the good Samaritan. (Wikimedia Commons/Nheyob)



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Our lives are uncertain, yet we live with the expectation that God's grace will protect us. We believe he sends his angels to help us, to navigate our daily lives. These angels are blessings sent from above, helping us to extend goodness to others and when we have been blessed abundantly.

Many times, unknown angels reach out to help us when we most need them, like in the story of the good Samaritan. They are everywhere, they have no cultural, social or political divides.

When have you met your good Samaritan? I met mine years ago, when I was traveling on a bus with my parents as a little girl. It was lunchtime, I was hungry and started to cry. In that moment, Sister Vini, a nun from the Congregation of the Order of the Servants of Mary, saw me crying.

Just like Mary rushed to help her cousin Elizabeth, Sister Vini reached into her bag, took a packet of roasted peanuts and fed a hungry child. In her kindness, she understood I was hungry. A year later, she was transferred to my school and became my class teacher and I developed a special affection for her.

Tragically, Sister Vini passed away in a sudden accident but I, along with all her students, fondly remember to this day this good Samaritan who lived a holy life.

Throughout our lives, we meet many good Samaritans and others who refuse the call of compassion. Their actions, both positive and negative, leave a lasting impact.

Jesus, the role model for all the good Samaritans, reminds us that by reaching out to the needy, we fulfill our mission on earth. However, it is important to remember that being a compassionate person often requires sacrifices, and these will often be unappreciated.

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In today's world, the essence of being a good Samaritan is misunderstood or even subjected to mockery. Jesus, too, was not appreciated when he performed miracles. His friends and disciples misunderstood him, and some people were always criticizing him. Yet he remained a good Samaritan.

I, too, have confronted mockery when trying to be compassionate. Yet I have come to understand it is OK to be bullied or mocked for doing good.

When I learned about the discriminatory practices within the Christian community, particularly regarding the caste system, I decided I could no longer tolerate this inequality. This paved the way for me to speak up for the Dalit Christians. When I started writing about the pain of the people, I was threatened and people tried to dissuade me saying that I would not be promoted in the congregation, etc.

I was threatened for standing up for the Dalit Christians in the church, yet I reflected on the mission of Jesus, who called me to follow him in reaching out to the needy. His words and deeds strengthened me to write letters of appeal for justice to the apostolic nuncio of New Delhi.

Though I am not a brave person, I trust in God's protection and know he takes care of me when I stand up for truth. I felt his presence in defending the voiceless. It was not easy for me to choose the less traveled road but it is in following Jesus, the good Samaritan, I understood the real meaning of my religious vocation.

We understand God's love better in our time because of the many good Samaritans around us. It is in helping the needy, poor and marginalized that we can lead a holy life. It is in sacrificing that we see the glory of the Resurrection. It is in loving that we can imitate the acts of Jesus' love. It is in being a good Samaritan that we can transform the world.

As we come to the end of our Lenten journey, I invite you to open your heart to embrace the spirit of the good Samaritan. Let us use this time of reflection and repentance to deepen our commitment to compassion and justice even when we are misunderstood, unloved and ignored. Remember that Jesus showed compassion to the good thief, even while on the cross.

May this fruitful season of Lent guide us to witness the resurrected Jesus, empowering us to go out to the whole world to continue the work of the good Samaritan.

Consider: How can we, like Jesus, extend a hand of mercy to those in need, even when faced with adversity or ridicule? How can we embody the transformative love that defines the essence of Lent? Jesus Christ, the good Samaritan, is on our side to help us.

This story appears in the **Lent** feature series. View the full series.