

A kingdom for all

Janice Scott *reflects on* Luke 10:25-37

Jesus trained seventy ordinary people to spread the message that God's kingdom was near. Perhaps the lawyer resented that such knowledge seemed to be hidden from him, for he asked Jesus what he must do to gain access to eternal life. Jesus answered in terms the lawyer would understand, asking how he interpreted the law. The lawyer responded correctly and Jesus commended him. But this was not enough for the legalistic man, so to press home his story of the good Samaritan, Jesus used a popular debate of the time about whether all Jews or only some needed to be considered as neighbours. In the story the two religious leaders – the priest and the Levite

– stuck rigidly to the law which proclaimed that if they touched a dead man they would be ritually defiled and have to undergo a period of cleansing before they could resume their normal duties. Assuming the injured man to be dead, they gave him a wide berth. Only the Samaritan – despised and seen as a religious deviant by orthodox Jews – offered comfort and healing.

The lawyer could not fail to understand the point of the story but, even so, could not bring himself to voice the dreaded word "Samaritan". Jesus pushed him to see beyond the literal interpretation of the law and to recognise that all who show God's love can enter God's kingdom. ☺



God of love, save us from falling into the trap of assuming that we do your will when we keep to the rules. Help us to learn and inwardly digest your greatest law, that of love. Amen.

Shared prayer

Part I – creative prayer

by Caroline Fletcher

Caroline Fletcher considers different ways we can pray together.

Praying creatively can remove barriers and encourage everyone to get involved. Here are a few suggestions:

- Writing prayers down or representing prayers with drawings. Post-it notes can be placed on a prayer board, or you could create a prayer tree – written prayers tied onto the branches, perhaps on leaf-shaped paper.

- Bubbles. Everyone says or thinks a short prayer and then blows bubbles into the air to symbolise prayers ascending to God. This works particularly well with children.
- Moving about. Set up prayer stations around the church or room, each with a different idea for what to pray about and how to pray. Ideas might include lighting a candle or using modelling clay to symbolise what is being prayed for. These are a just few ideas. Why don't you see what you can come up with? ☺

“If you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.”

Mother Teresa (1910-1997), Roman Catholic nun and missionary

Characters from the lectionary

by Julian Smith

St Swithun, bishop, is commemorated on Friday. Julian Smith looks at his life and legacy.

Immortality is assured when a rose is named after you. St Swithun has a “large, strongly-scented, soft-pink blooms of more than a hundred petals” to his name.

But his fame does not depend upon a rose. Nor does it depend upon knowledge of his holy and humble life, his ten years as Bishop of Winchester in the mid-

tenth century, or his time as an adviser to King Egbert. Swithun is remembered for the legends that attend the moving of his body.

According to his wishes Swithun was buried in a simple grave outside his cathedral. When a new cathedral was being built it was planned to move his remains to a shrine within the building. Despite dire warnings of storms and tempests Swithun's remains were moved on 15 July 971 and forty days of storms ensued.

Never mind the rose, Swithun is remembered for his link to the weather and his day anticipated with trepidation. ☺