



Reflection for the 2015 LifeLink Christmas Appeal - Homily

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As we know, LifeLink has been, since 1994, the fundraiser organisation for our social service agencies which have been established and funded by our Archdiocese. The support that our parishes, schools and many generous individuals have given over the years has been magnificent. Literally, hundreds of thousands of Western Australians have been helped as they have received care and all manner of support because of the gift our Catholic community offers by reaching out to others in need.

The portion of St Luke's Gospel we have just heard has brought out in the parable of the Good Samaritan that it is no longer sufficient to love one's neighbour as oneself. The Christian is called to love the other in the same way that we have been loved by God. The compassion of the Father for humanity urged Him to send His son to lift us up to new life.

The Samaritan was moved to the same level of compassion, we are told by Jesus. In other words, he is moved to feel as God feels. The compassion stirred up within him was divine compassion. It is when he began to act with that compassion, the Samaritan became the image of God. God's love for humanity was able to be seen and felt. It was revealed through the Samaritan's humanity and the working of the Spirit within him.

The Samaritan image, like the image of the Good Shepherd, is applied to Jesus Himself. He is the manifestation of God the Father, whose desire is to be close to each person in such a way that His love can be experienced. So many times in the Gospels, we find Jesus being with those who were suffering. Their encounter with the Lord resulted in healing, reconciliation on many levels, and the discovery of a new path to follow.

This parable also reveals the choice of God to create a new household for His people. It is meant to be a place of hospitality and safety. It is, as Pope Francis has described it, a field hospital. It is the community of the disciples of the Lord, the Church. This community is to look out beyond itself and notice the needs of people around it.



It is for this reason that LifeLink exists. LifeLink provides the Archdiocese with the means to respond to the needs of brothers and sisters that we see around us.

I have a story that really shines a light on LifeLink and how it makes it possible for the Archdiocese to reach out to people who suffer because of disadvantage.

It is some years ago that I met a man who was living rough on the streets around the city. He was living the worst and darkest time of his life. He had given up caring for himself; he was malnourished and an alcoholic.

When you see someone in this state, it is so easy to turn away, perhaps become more engaged in that conversation with your companion so that you can hurry by and not notice the appalling condition and need of the person.

I came to have a few encounters with him, enough that I was able to hear something of his history.

He had had a very happy upbringing, a good family that loved him and many opportunities that enabled him to succeed. He married a wonderful woman and had a beautiful family.

All of this changed when his wife and children were killed in an horrific car accident. The effects on him were devastating and he began to spiral into hopelessness and depression.

He was to visit Shopfront in Maylands. He didn't go often, but he found that he was accepted as he was. He came to the realisation that love still existed. This was enough for him to believe that he could make the way back.

He has made some steps back and is dealing with the loss in a better way.

Often, we never have the chance to see the work our donations do for people. That does not matter too much. What does matter is that we know that, through LifeLink, a huge number of people are touched by the compassion of Christ through our agencies.

Through LifeLink's appeals, we have a part to play in the Church's mission: to be with and to love the other with the very love of God.