

(Following is the homily preached by Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University, at the Dedication Mass for the Notre Dame London Law Centre July 29, 1983.)

My dear friends:

The first reading, which Sean Concannon read, is fairly simple. We don't have to go to the highest heavens to look for the law because it really is innate within all of us. We all have our sense of what is right and what is wrong and what is just. We have that inner voice that speaks to us, and we call it conscience. It is hard to hide from it, and it is almost always there when we need it. There is something inside us which is a call to justice.

But going beyond that in speaking of the Gospel story today, we see another quality of the lawyer, one that is not always there and is always needed. If you were to ask me, "What would you want the law faculty to do?" I would have to say, "Turn out competent lawyers, lawyers who know the law, and who are competent in doing their job. But if you ask me "Is that enough?" I would have to say, "No." The lawyer who spoke to Jesus in the story we just read did us a great favor because he asked Him, "What do I have to do to be saved?" The Lord's answer was simple and Socratic. He said to the lawyer "What do you think?" And the man said quite truly, "You have to love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." And Jesus said, "You are right. Do that and you will be saved."

But then the lawyer wanted to get the last word, and asked, "But who is my neighbor?" And Jesus told that wonderful story of The Good Samaritan. Now the story is simple, and I don't have to retell it. But I can explain, I think, something of what it means. If you have ever walked down the road, as I have, between

Jerusalem and Jericho you go down through a deep and winding valley with high hills on both sides. The land is seared and hot, much hotter than it is here. As you go down that dusty road, you can also see the new superhighway which the Israelis have built. The old road is hot and dusty and twisting down to the Dead Sea. A short distance from the road's end is Jericho, a beautiful little oasis about 800 feet below sea level. Well the man got set upon, not unusual for us today--a man gets mugged, beaten up, robbed, stripped of anything worth taking and left bleeding, probably naked, certainly penniless there in the hot sun by the roadside.

It is interesting that Jesus said that the first person who went by was a priest because he kept on walking. He did not want to get involved. He could see there was a problem, but he sidled over to the side of the road and slid by without even going near the person who was injured and wounded and maybe even dying and helpless. Next was the Levite, a member of the priestly class in Israel. He, too, did not want to get involved. His reaction was similar to those who pass an accident on the toll road or highway. They don't want to get involved so they slide by and hope the guy makes it who is lying on the side of the road in a wreck of a car. Doctors do that; lawyers do that; priests do that too, sometimes.

But then comes the Samaritan. He is very carefully chosen because the Samaritans were the Negroes of that day, despised by the majority. Jesus makes it the Samaritan who looks at this poor, wounded fellow and is moved to compassion. He stops, and he goes over, and he does what he can do with the fellow. He pours in wine, the only disinfectant he's got (at least it has some alcohol in it), and he pours in the oil to try to soothe the pain of the wound. And it is a long way down that little road through those hills, and he puts the man on his own beast of burden while he walks.

He does not take him to a local hospital or call the Red Cross; there isn't any such thing. He takes him himself to the only place you can take a person in that shape--to the inn, the caravansary. He takes him and says, "Do what you can, I have to go on, but here is some money to take care of it, and I will stop on the way back, and if it costs more, I will take care of that, too." And Jesus asked the lawyer, "Who was his neighbor?" and he said, "The one that was moved to compassion."

I would have to say to you that it is not enough to know the law. There are a lot of marvelously trained lawyers who are paid enormous fees for very competent work. But with 600,000 lawyers in our country today, as against 15,000 in all of Japan and practically none in China, one would think we could not possibly have all the discontinuities of justice that occur in our cities, in our states, and in our nation. You would think that no one would really be suffering because of his or her rights not being vindicated.

A lawyer has to have something more than just competence because he or she is a professional person, and a professional person is at the service of those in need. If you are a priest you have to have your antennae out to people who need help for salvation, nourishment for their souls. If you are a doctor you have to be open to people who need help in their health and their physical well-being. If you are a psychiatrist, you have to be sensitive to those who need to restore their mental well-being. And, if you are a lawyer, you have to be on the side of those who are suffering injustice, who ~~don't have~~ <sup>are denied</sup> the human dignity they were born with, who don't have their rights respected as they should be, who are oppressed and powerless.

You don't really come through as a professional person--as a lawyer, or a doctor, or a priest, or a psychiatrist, or a teacher--unless you are compassionate,

unless you suffer with those who suffer, and unless you are open to those who need your help. That is what makes you a professional person, being there to serve those who need you, whether you get paid for it or not. Now you say that is crazy, that is idealistic. It may be okay for you, Father Ted, because you don't need the money. But I say to you that if, as a lawyer, you go through your whole life and you never stand up to defend justice; if you can't reach out to the poor, the powerless, the minorities who need help; and if you don't have compassion, you are not a neighbor. Nor are you really a good professional person. And you may not save your soul.

None of you has seen God--I have not seen God--but we all see our neighbors around us, suffering, poor, and in need of us. And if we walk by because we don't want to get involved or there is no money in it to justify the hassle, we may be successful as lawyers in Chicago or New York or San Francisco or Atlanta or New Orleans, but we will not be professional persons or good Christians. Actually, we will not even be good lawyers, because a lawyer cannot be separated from his or her professional commitment, and our professional commitment is to people.

I have been impressed by some very good lawyers I know who always have time to step out of their regular practice to take care of someone who is being passed by, someone whom everyone is walking around, to the right and to the left, leaving them lying in the street. I think these are the people who love God the only way we can love Him--in our neighbor, in the ones we see, the least brethren. If you go through your professional life only serving the most brethren, it is not going to be anywhere near as satisfying as you might think. One of our Deans used to tell his students, "If, at the end of your professional

life as a lawyer, justice has not been better served or accomplished in your time or if people are still in great numbers suffering injustice because no one is there to vindicate them, you have not been a very good lawyer."

So today at this Red Mass we can pray to the Holy Spirit for all kinds of different gifts. If I were a young lawyer I think I would pray for a sense of justice. I would pray that I had the courage not just to spend a lot of time studying the law, but also to spend the rest of my life learning it better. Beyond that I would want to ask one more thing. I would want to ask the Lord to give me a sense of compassion, to say, "Lord, don't let me walk by the people who need me. Don't let me sidle off to the side of the road and slide by, as though I don't really see it. Give me the sense to be the Samaritan, to be touched with compassion at what I see. Give me the generosity to step in and do something about it. Lord, let me love you in your least brethren, because that is the only way I can, and let me be a great lawyer because I do something, whatever I can, wherever I am, to make justice a reality in my day." May we all pray for that today, each one of us in our own way.