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I met Brenda outside the Burger King across from the Park St T stop in Boston last Monday. She was with her son's friend, Jeremy, and she told me about how she had lost her apartment because of rising rent, being priced out in the process known as gentrification. She had received a section eight housing voucher good for \$1800, but the cheapest place she could find went for \$3000 a month. She was near the top of the list to receive another voucher, and she asked me and the teenagers I was with to pray that she find housing, and so I asked of one of our teens to lead us in intercessory prayer for Brenda's intention on the street. I wonder how many people went into Burger King that snowy Monday afternoon, and I wonder if any stopped to ask if they could do anything to help her, even if it was only to say a prayer. I wondered that because what I saw was people walking by and glaring at us like we were doing something crazy by speaking with her. As you know the stereotype is that the homeless are drug addicts or alcoholics, not someone like Brenda.

Our society does not often think as Christ wants us to think. We bear the image of God but a broken image, due to Original Sin, an image that God wants to restore in us, that we might bear the image of the heavenly one, the Second Adam, Christ, as Saint Paul explains in the second reading.

And because we are broken, we often like to make excuses for ourselves so that Jesus doesn't challenge us too much. Anything to not take the Word of God at its very word. There's a school of Biblical interpretation that begins with the principle that Jesus didn't work miracles, so they conclude, "he could not multiply loaves and fishes. He got everyone to share their tuna fish sandwiches," despite the fact that those who witnessed it clearly say that is not what happened. We even say, "Saint Paul didn't understand human nature, so his teachings are out of date," as if at some point it was not human nature to love and be loved. But when it comes to the teachings of Christ we are tempted to say, "Yeah, Jesus wants us to forgive, but what this person did was too much. It doesn't apply. Or he wants us to help the poor but the poor in his day were not the stereotypical drug addicts or alcoholics so it no longer applies."

This is why no Gospel passage makes us more uncomfortable than today's because it lays it out plainly so that there is no getting out of it. "Do to others as you would have them do to you." If I were homeless like Brenda, whether or not I was that stereotypical drug addict, I'd want help, even if help was just a smile and a prayer. Hence Pope Francis' remark that,

"God is in every person's life. God is in everyone's life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else – God is in this person's life. You

can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”

This very simple way of how to treat others applies to every area of our lives. How should I treat those who wrong me? Well, if I wronged someone, I wouldn't want them to run around bad-mouthing me for it. I wouldn't want them to seek revenge. I'd want them to confront me to work it out because maybe what I did was an accident. I'd want them to accept my apology and be merciful as God is merciful. Confronting the other is basically what turning the other cheek amounts to. If you doubt that, then look to the Gospels when Christ is struck, and he does not ask for more, but challenges the person by saying "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23). Christ is not suggesting being walked all over; it is suggesting standing up against evil without retaliation out of love for the other.

Even the off-cited line from today's passage about judging is often wrongly turned into, "Well, I can't judge them, so I better let him be." But if I was about to do something that harmed me or the ones I loved, I'd want you to tell me to stop me! Love, motivated by concern for the other, is the Christian difference. In every situation, do unto others as we would have them do unto you.

There is a funny scene in the movie *Monsignor Quixote* in which the know-it-all young priest is talking about some modern theologian who he finds useful, and the wise old priest says that for most people and their everyday problems, the simple Gospels and spiritual classics will do. So very often people ask me, or I ask my spiritual director, "Father, what is the loving thing to do here?" We love to complicate things here, when it is all rather quite simple: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.