

Reflection Monday 1st Week of Lent 2022

If you have difficulty in understanding what it means to *love your neighbour*, Leviticus makes it very clear what not to do, while Jesus spells out what we need to do positively. What is also very clear is that helping the needy is of benefit to the whole community.

Story: We were “*dirt poor*” and lived on a dirt road, on a sand lot. I was playing outside one morning when I heard a sharp clanking sound. My eyes were drawn to two rows of men, dressed in black and white, striped, baggy uniforms. Their faces were covered with dust and sweat. They looked weary and were chained together with huge, black, iron chains. Hanging from the end of each chained row was a large iron ball. It was a “*Chain Gang*,” guarded by two, heavily armed, guards. I stared at the prisoners as they sat uncomfortably in the dirt, under the shade of the trees. One of the guards knocked at our door. My mother appeared and the guard asked permission to take water from our pump, so that “*his men*” could “*have a drink*”. My mother agreed, but I saw a look of concern on her face, as she called me inside. Each prisoner was unchained in order to take a drink from a small tin cup, while a guard watched vigilantly. Soon they were all chained again before retreating back into the shade, away from an unrelenting sun. Meanwhile my mother was bustling around with tins of tuna fish, mayonnaise, our last loaf of bread, and two, big pitchers of lemonade. In the “*blink of an eye*”, she had a tray of sandwiches using the tuna for our supper that night.

Handing me a pitcher of lemonade, my mother lifted the tray in one hand and the other pitcher and trotted me across the street. Approaching the guards, she said, “*We had some leftovers from lunch, and would like to share them with you and your men.*” Everyone started to their feet. “*Oh no!*” she said. “*Stay where you are! I’ll just serve you!*” She went from guard to guard, then prisoner to prisoner, filling each tin cup with lemonade, and giving each man a sandwich.

They all said “*thank you, ma’am!*” The last prisoner was a big man, his dark skin pouring with sweat and streaked with dust. Suddenly, his face broke into a wonderful smile. Looking into my mother’s eyes, he said, “*Ma’am, I’ve wondered all my life if I’d ever see an angel, and now I have! Thank you!*” Again, my mother’s smile took in the whole group. “*You’re all welcome!*” she said. “*God bless you.*” Then we walked back to the house, with empty tray and pitchers. The only explanation my mother ever gave me, for that wonderful day, was “*remember, always, to entertain strangers, for by doing so, you may entertain angels, without knowing.*” Then, with a mysterious smile, she went about the rest of the day. I don’t remember what we ate for supper, that night. I just know it was served by an angel.