

What do you really think about priests?

Maybe the clergy are the problem in making things unduly complicated, being all holy and religious and forgetting some of the basics, passing by on the other side, instead of bandaging up the wounded.

And the lawyers aren't much better – asking all those awkward questions, deliberately trying to undermine people, constantly trying to justify their own existence.

But a Samaritan traveller who came upon the wounded man was moved with compassion....He bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them....carried him to the inn....looked after him and even paid the innkeeper for any ongoing care.

Certainly not a member of the clergy, not even an Israelite, but a foreigner and an outsider – this was the man who *was moved with compassion*, who did what needed to be done. He wasn't just doing his civic duty. He wasn't just fulfilling the rules of his religion. What it says was that he *was moved with compassion*.

To be moved with compassion means it comes from the heart and something inside ourselves tells us, compels us to do something. We see another human being in distress and we have to do something. Our heart goes out to him. We don't just ring 999 or call social services. We get involved. We don't just bandage up the wounded person, we stay with them, we share with them in their suffering, we stand with them in their pain.

This is the very heart of our religion, coming to Mass and saying our prayers is not enough. Being very busy as Christians in the world is not enough. Being politically engaged is not enough. Giving money to charity is not enough. Without compassion all these good and worthy things are just a clever way of passing by on the other side.

It's hard, it's difficult – acting out of compassion is a challenge. Sharing with someone in their suffering will cost us everything. It means being completely open and vulnerable to the other person - not just the opening of our hands or our wallets but the opening up of our own hearts; a bit like Jesus in fact *who reconciles everything in heaven and everything on earth.....by his death on the Cross*.

All of us must look long and hard into the depths of our hearts – priests, Levites and lawyers especially – what sort of person am I? What is the moving force of my heart? Is it compassion or is it just enlightened self-interest? We all need a hefty dose of penitence and prayer and opening up.