15th C

# MDP of God

I’d like to share a little story with you – It’s the memory of a woman named Alice and it’s a memory she has of her school days growing up in the South– the names have been changed – since I couldn’t pronounce the original name

Alice says, “One day at lunch time I was getting ready to eat the same old tuna fish sandwich that mom so often packed for my lunch

When all of a sudden, Mrs. O’Reilly, my 4th grade teacher asked me if she could buy my sandwich off of me.

She explained that I could use the money she would give me to buy a hot lunch from the cafeteria—she says, “*I was thrilled”*

I had never bought my lunch at the cafeteria- it was too expensive for my family”

Alice says, “You can understand my delight when I had the opportunity to buy a hot lunch

Kids always complained about the cafeteria food, but I was very envious of them – it sure looked good to me

When we finished lunch that day, Mrs O’Reilly took me aside and said she wanted to explain why she bought the sandwich.

You see she was Catholic and she told me that Catholics didn’t eat meat on Fridays”

Alice says, “I couldn’t wait to get home and tell my mom that from now on I always wanted her to pack tuna fish for me on Fridays

From then on – every Friday I could get in line with the rest of the kids for a hot lunch

I didn’t care about how many of the kids complained about the cafeteria food – to me it tasted divine”.

And Alice concludes by saying, “I realize now that Mrs O’Reilly could have fixed herself a tuna sandwich on Fridays.

But she bought my sandwich because she saw a little girl who was thrilled over the simple act of having a hot lunch.

I will never forget her for her compassion and generosity”

That’s nice – you might say

But it’s really more than nice – *it was really a wonderful act of mercy*

This teacher had her eyes wide open- she saw a little girl, who to others seemed to be getting along just fine – but who actually felt different and isolated from other children

And the teacher allowed what she saw to move her heart – and so she made a decision to do something about the little girl’s situation

And as Alice related – it made a big difference to the little girl

My friends, most of us don’t get the chance to do large and outstanding acts of mercy

But the chance for small, **but significant** acts of mercy face us almost

everyday

It’s a matter of recognizing the needs of the people around us and responding

In today’s gospel we heard of three men who came across someone in need – two of them did nothing – the third one reached out with compassion

The priest and the Levite- [By the way, I just love these readings when the priest is the bad guy- they always just make my day]- saw the man in need, and they passed by

Maybe they didn’t want to get involved – maybe they were too busy – maybe they had people waiting for them- *whatever the reason* –**they did nothing**

We would call that in Catholic theology – a sin of **omission**

**Remember** *we can sin* by what we do and *what we fail to do*

In that story of Alice and Mrs O’Reilly – what the teacher did was very simple – yet it made an impact on the little girl

And my friends – it’s so important that we recognize that *in very little ways* we can show compassion and care to the people around us

A kind word – a sincere inquiry as to how someone is doing – a card – a phone call- a visit to someone who is lonely or elderly

Little things like that make a big difference to people

Just this week we had our senior high Harvest Workers and our junior high service workers

Between the two groups we had about 100 young people bring the love of Jesus to the elderly—some who were ill—some who were in nursing homes

I know when I did my Communion calls on Friday—we had people who the teens visited—some had tears in their eyes as they spoke about how wonderful the teens were –praying with them –helping them with work they can no longer do

Itl; just gave me so much hope to see so many of our young people who were willing to bring the love of Jesus to others—*and their efforts really touched a lot of hearts*

*One of the areas* where we most need to be compassionate – is with the people we live with – our families

Because it’s with the people we see every day that **our character** *really gets a work out*

I can’t tell you the number of times that people have shared with me how a parent or someone else in a family **was great** *to everyone outside the home* – **but when they came home** there was no compassion- no support – no kindness

CS Lewis actually addresses this in his book “The Screwtape Letters”

He says that one of Satan’s strategies is to try to get people *to feel compassion and concern for the poor throughout the world that they never met*---but to be mean and impatient and unkind to the people they live with

That way the compassion and care are pretty much an illusion--- where *the meanness and impatience* **is very much real**--- *that’s what’s being lived*

The way you treat your husband or wife – the way you treat your parents or your children – your brothers and sisters---the way you treat classmates at school or co-workers

Are you a Good Samaritan to them?

Do you treat them with compassion?

We sometimes might daydream how we’d like to do great and wonderful things for people throughout the world – *but that really has to start at home* – with your spouse – your kids – your parents – your brothers or sisters

**Then** *to be extended to the people you deal with regularly*—co-workers- classmates- neighbors

As we come together today the Lord is challenging us to be people of compassion and mercy

To reach out as neighbors to the people around us

I’d encourage you to start that compassion at home, ---- *don’t limit it to home*---but start there

Jesus is calling us, with God’s grace, to reach out with compassion to all who **He sees** as our neighbors