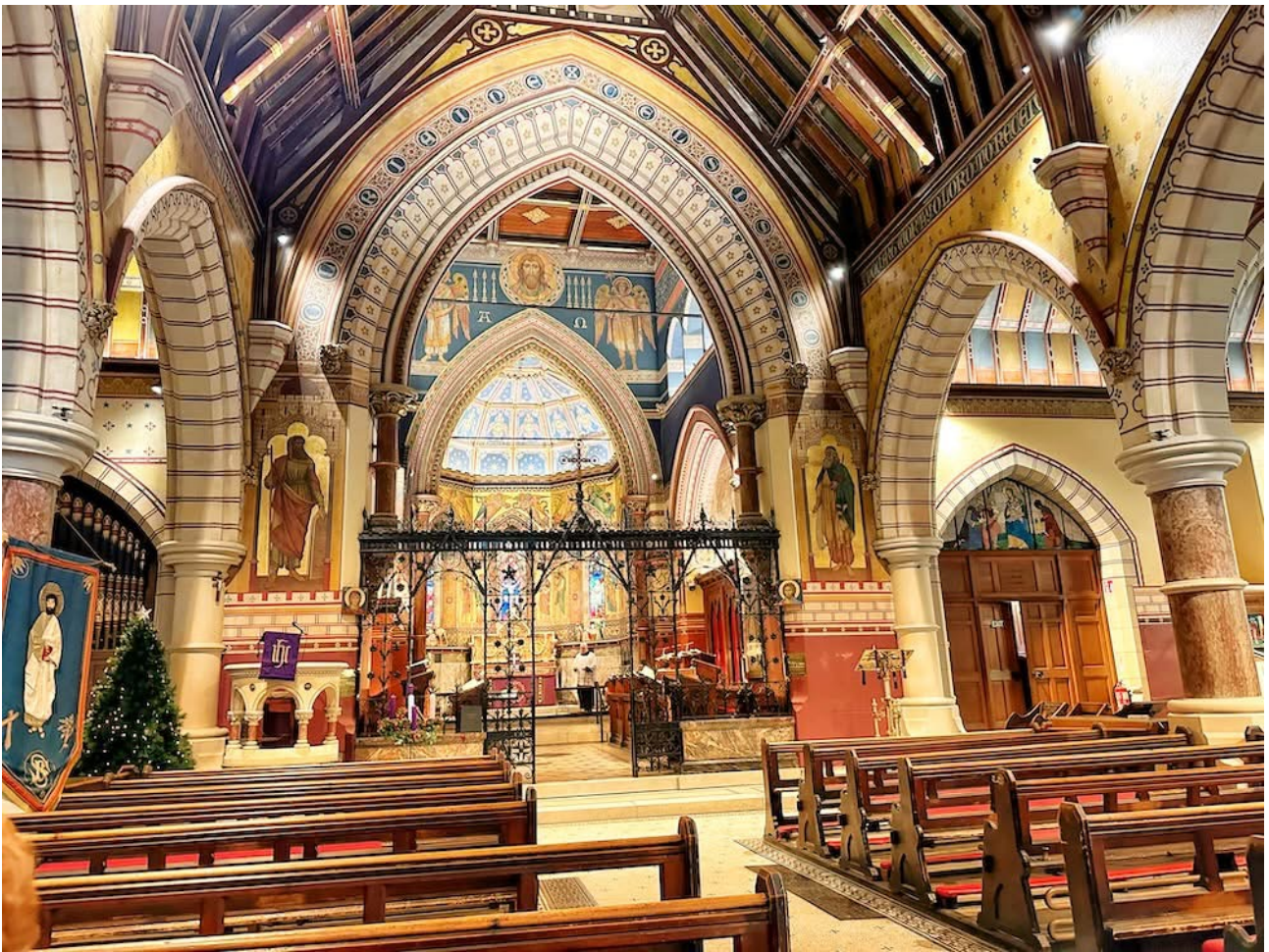


Speaking to the soul



Neighbours

Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. Luke 10:33-34

I love the parable of the Good Samaritan, not least because it would have come as such a complete surprise to Jesus' hearers. Jesus was being challenged by an expert in the law who asked for the legal definition of the word neighbour. He must have been expecting a sophisticated technical response, and instead Jesus told him a story.

To any Jew, the parable was deeply shocking. The fact that a man had been ambushed on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho wasn't surprising. The winding road that connected the two communities made it an ideal place to attack a traveller, all so different from the large straight highway that we see today. What was shocking was that the priest and Levite did nothing. No doubt they felt that they had perfect excuses, since touching a dying man could have made them unclean and therefore unable to perform their duties in the temple. Even so, anyone with any heart would realise that they should have responded to the helpless man. Astonishingly, Jesus chose to make the hero of the story a Samaritan. The Jews and Samaritans hated one another with a passion, and Jesus' decision to focus all the attention on the loving generosity of the Samaritan would have been deeply offensive to his Jewish audience.

Jesus was making a simple and straightforward point. Whoever you are, if you really care for another person, you need to do something. Worshipping God is worth nothing if it doesn't lead to loving, caring, costly action.

QUESTION

Who is your neighbour and what does it mean for you to love your neighbour as yourself?

PRAYER

Lord God our Father, give me your strength and wisdom to enable me to show love to my neighbours today. Amen

Photo - Parish Church of St Bartholomew, Dublin

