



St Dominic's Sixth Form College

Thoughts from Year 2 Core RE | March 2025

At the end of February students were invited to think back over all the talks they had attended so far. They were asked which were the ones that had stuck most in their minds. *"To be honest, all of them did"* was obviously a pleasing response! So, too, was the fact that many students said *why* a particular talk had made an impact on them. For example, the student who said the Holocaust Talk was especially memorable explained, *"It gave me a new perspective on history."* Andrew's talk about three schools he had visited in India struck a chord with many students because of its emphasis on kindness and because as one student explained, *"It made me reflect on the life that I have and how lucky I am."* The different talks which were singled out give an idea of the variety of the Y2 programme (The "official" title of each talk in the programme is given in brackets):

"The talk by the nun" (Sister Karen: Dominican Tradition)

"The talk about Life after death" (Can these Bones Live?)

"The one about the Good Samaritan" (Never off Duty)

"The one on stress and revision" (Enjoying and Achieving)

"The RAF talk" (Military Chaplaincy)

"The talk about HIV" (Positive Voice)

"The talk on what faith is really all about" (Believing is Doing)

"The one on artwork" (Religion and Art)

"The one about war" (November Remembrance)

"The one about sharing food" (Supper at Emmaus)

Following the “Never off Duty” talk, Year 2 students completed an assessment. They were to say how the painting of “The Good Samaritan” by Van Gogh speaks to them, as an individual.



There were lots of lovely pieces of work, including the two pieces below.

Victoria Gawron: The first time I looked at Van Gogh’s painting of the Good Samaritan, the stream of water in the background was certainly the first thing to grab my attention. It felt almost overwhelming, as if its purpose was to focus the watcher’s eyes on its distinctly compelling nature. It is strangely comforting in a story that centres around neglect and violence.

I like to think that Van Gogh was trying to focus on love and compassion, the

Samaritan’s ability to show kindness when nobody else did. Despite having read the parable of the Good Samaritan before, it felt equally shocking and disappointing to hear how the man, who was robbed, was neglected by both a Priest and Levite. Surely, these are people who one would assume would be there for them at any time but, even more especially, during a time of desperate need!

I think this makes Van Gogh’s celebration of the Samaritan so much more special. He’s an ordinary man, a charitable and caring person who saved the life of a man who had been robbed. It almost inspires confidence in the watcher of the painting, as the parable serves a reminder of the altruism that we are all capable of.

The way the robbery victim desperately clings onto the Samaritan’s shirt, and the way his leg hangs freely over the side of the horse emphasises his depression and exhaustion. He is relying wholly on the Samaritan’s help. Perhaps, had it not been for this support, the man would not have survived. It’s interesting to also consider that the figure in the background may have been another passer-by. Either one of those mentioned in the parable, or a different careless and

disinterested human. The way his back is turned away, and the greyish hues with which he is painted, compared to that of the beaten man and the Samaritan, almost makes me think that he is shown to have turned his back on God. For a person who shows love to another is showing love to God, and the person who shows hatred to another is showing hatred for God. It may be presumptuous of me to say this, but might Van Gogh be saying there are consequences for taking the dry and stone path? It is not the path to heaven. We are meant to embody love and virtue, not hatred or indifference. This makes me feel like the painting is more than just an appreciation of the Samaritan's heroism and selflessness, it is an instruction for us to act as he did, because to love and serve people is to love and serve the Lord.

Yasmin Oraee Yazidi: The painting of the Good Samaritan shows me the nobility and morality of those who help others even when it causes them difficulty. In the painting, we can clearly see the effort that it takes for the Samaritan to heave the victim onto his horse. But we can also see the dependency that the victim has on the Samaritan. This elicits sympathy towards the victim but also pride towards the Samaritan who shoulders this difficulty. There is no apparent benefit that the Samaritan gains from the difficulty. He only helps the victim out of a sense of duty and morality.

This to me makes his act more noble, since it is not done out of selfish intent, and he does not gain anything. In the parable, the Samaritan actually loses money rather than gains anything. Yet he still helps the victim even though helping is to his own detriment.

The painting shows a person walking away in the distance, presumably the priest from the parable. This speaks to me as it shows that being religious is not necessarily in your status or appearance, rather the Samaritan is acting more religiously in this instance since his faith is apparent through his actions instead of his words. The Samaritan's simple clothes and the simple background of nature in the picture further speak to me about the simplicity of being kind and doing good acts. Acting morally does not always need to be extravagant.

Overall, the most important message of this painting to me is the importance of fulfilling our duty and acting morally even when nobody else chooses to, and even when doing good does not benefit you and instead causes you difficulty. This is a character trait often emphasised in modern philosophy, such as in Kantian ethics, but also in my own faith of Islam where we are taught to do good in private and tell nobody to ensure that our intentions are noble and not meant

to make ourselves appear better in society. To do good when nobody is watching and when it causes you harm is true moral character, and this painting illustrates that to me.

Wishing you a Happy Easter

Helena Shaw

Head of Core RE