

Humility is a disposition of the heart

The 22nd Sunday in Ord Time – Cycle C

SIR 3:17-18, 20, 28-29, PS 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11, HEB 12:18-19, 22-24A, LK 14:1, 7-14



Dcn. Frank Sila
8/27/2016

In the late 90s I had the pleasure of knowing a construction superintendent by the name of Scotty. Scotty was a man short in stature but long on character. He sported a wide mustache and yellow suspenders made to look like measuring tapes. As the construction superintendent, he oversaw the job site and monitored the progress of the project. He held a degree in engineering and had no problem keeping everyone on a no nonsense timeline. Scotty was more comfortable in the field than the office. Most days would find him on the job site checking blueprints and giving direction to the various trades.

In Scotty's many years, he learned many valuable shortcuts and was more than willing to pass them forward to those starting out. Scotty called the carpenters either 'Chippy' or 'Notty' and the electricians were, 'Sparky.' I heard him more than once yell something like, "Hey there 'Chippy' you wanna see a better way to lay that out?" Now, if 'Chippy' could get beyond ego and arrogance, Scotty would show them a thing or two from his experience. Teaching someone how to make a proper saw cut, Scotty would come away covered in sawdust. That is how I remember him, yellow suspenders, covered in sawdust leaning over a set of blueprints.

One Friday, I received a call from Scotty asking me to meet him on-site to check 'Sparky's' progress. It was already well after five but I agreed to meet him. By the time I arrived, all the trades had left for the day. Scotty and I reviewed the prints and progress. We talked for a few minutes and Scotty said, "Well, I need to be going." Curious as to why he was in a hurry, I asked what his plans were for the weekend. Scotty said, "Nothing special." Then quietly he added, "I have an elderly neighbor that I care for. I am going home to make supper and take a plate over to him."

Humility is a disposition of the heart. Pride limits our vision and constricts us. When we fill our lives with concerns over turf, power and control then we are blind to those around us. We are blind to their gifts. When we are all puffed up and full of ourselves we not only fail to see as God sees, we fail to see God.

Scotty did not define himself by his education as an engineer. He was not impressed with titles. In that humility, he was able to see someone else's needs.

Pope Francis writes, "Humility means understanding that the delights, pains and needs of others are as important as our own, even though they don't feel so. When we are humble, we can laugh at our self-importance and sometimes, even, set it aside. We can see our own faults and the strengths of others."

In our first reading we hear the admonition to, "... conduct your affairs with humility." *Sirach 3:17* In our Gospel, Jesus shares the parable of the wedding feast where the guests were choosing places of honor. This parable is more than an Emily Post moment on seating etiquette. Jesus finishes the parable saying, "...the one who humbles himself will be exalted." *Luke 14:11*

The practice of humility is a key that unlocks and opens us. When we humble ourselves, we are acknowledging a greatness beyond self. Jesus teaches us humility, to avoid embarrassment, yes, but more importantly as a first step in our relationships with each other. Again, this parable is more than social etiquette. Jesus knows that our relationship to the Father starts with humility. Jesus is giving us the tools that we need to find our Father. "A humble and contrite heart you will not spurn, O Lord." *Psalm 51* Sharing life with the Father, *we will indeed be exalted.*

Humility unlocks for us a new vision and way to conduct our affairs. Scotty valued a jobsite apprentice enough to share his wisdom. He recognized the value of an elderly neighbor. Humility recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of the other. For we are, each of us, created in God's image and likeness.

A word for those that might equate humility with weakness. There are many stories of humility that follow Mahatma Gandhi. There is one story in which Gandhi, while meeting with officials to end British rule, dismissed the housekeeper, choosing to serve his political adversaries by pouring their afternoon tea. Gandhi's many acts of humility ultimately gave birth to a nation.

Dr. Martin Luther King's humility gave strength to his message of non-violence. He gave us prayerful hope and a dream that our world will learn to conduct itself with humility.

Jesus always points the way to the Father. May we receive the Eucharist today in quiet humility, listening for his voice and direction.

References

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Francis, P. (2015). *Laudato Si*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Note: Not so many years ago, I saw someone from the company that employed Scotty. I inquired as to how Scotty was doing since I had not seen him in some time. I was told that, a couple of years prior, Scotty had been hospitalized and died within a few days. May he rest in peace. His humility touched many.