

22nd Sunday per Annum - C
Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29;
Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a;
Luke 14:1, 7-14
Little Flower - 9/1/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

Both today's first reading and today's Gospel are about the virtue of humility.

Most of us are familiar with the beautiful passage from the Prophet Micah: "...*this is what God asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God*" [6:8]. Scripture scholars tell us that this verse sums up the teachings of the three previous prophets. Walking humbly with God was the key theme of the Prophet Isaiah. Therefore, if we want to understand the core meaning of humility, we need to understand what Isaiah meant by walking humbly with God.

One author has suggested that Isaiah challenged the people of Israel to have a quiet faith in God. In other words, Isaiah was suggesting that we need to understand that God is in charge of our lives, and we need to have faith that God is with us on our journey of life. In times of crises, we need to have "faith, not feverish anxiety."¹ Faith for Isaiah is "absolute trust in and dependence on God." In one verse, Isaiah captures the meaning of faith: "*By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and in trust your strength lies.*" [30:15]. For Isaiah, then, walking humbly with God meant having a quiet, trusting faith in God.

One time I was talking to a minister who was the father of that year's Brownsburg High School valedictorian. When I congratulated him and his wife on their daughter's achievements and valedictory address, he said, "My wife and I are humbly grateful." He went on to explain that both he and his wife recognized how many people contributed to their daughter's success.

A humble person is humbly grateful. A humble person recognizes that he or she is not a self-made person. A humble person recognizes the interdependence of all creation. All that we are and all that we have are God's gifts to us directly or indirectly through others. The persons we are today were shaped by our parents both in the areas of nature and nurture. The persons we are today were shaped by our teachers, coaches, and other mentors both when we were children and as adults. The persons we are today were shaped by the people we have chosen as friends and associates. When we are humbly grateful, we cannot forget our environment. We have opportunities by virtue of living in a country blessed with so many natural resources.

A humbly grateful person becomes a servant leader. A humbly grateful person, therefore, shares his or her gifts and talents with others and with the community. In his column this week, Fr. Ron Rolheiser wrote, "The famed and feisty psychologist, Fritz Pearls, was once asked by a well-meaning Christian if he was saved. He responded by saying, I am still trying to figure out how to be spent! His retort echoes a line from Theresa of Avila who states that once we reach the highest mansion of maturity we are left with only one question: How can I be helpful?"²

My brothers and sisters, once again a story from Pope Francis illustrates the meaning of humility. The picture of him carrying his satchel into the plane for his trip to Brazil for World Youth Day went viral. No one had ever seen a Pope carry his own bag. When one journalist asked him why he was carrying his own bag and what was in it, he showed his sense of humor. He answered, "It wasn't the key for the atom bomb! Well! I was carrying it because that's what I've always done. When I travel, I carry it. And inside, what was there? There was a razor, a breviary, an appointment book, a book to read, I brought one about Saint Thérèse, to whom I have a devotion. I have always taken a bag with me when travelling – it's normal. ... we must be normal..."³

¹Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Living Word of the Old Testament*, Second Edition, (London: Longman, 1973), p. 270. Both quotations come from page 270. This entire paragraph is based on "Chapter Nine: Judah's Covenant with Death."

²Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., "Have I Been Saved?" San Antonio, Texas, August 25, 2013, <http://www.ronrolheiser.com/columnarchive/?id=1277>.

³Pope Francis, Apostolic Journey to Rio De Janeiro on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Press Conference of Pope Francis During the Return Flight, Papal Flight, Sunday, 28 July 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-conferenza-stampa_en.html.