

25th Sunday per Annum - B
Wisdom 2:12, 17-20;
James 3:16-4:3;
Mark 9:30-37
Little Flower - 9/23/12

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's Gospel, even as Jesus was prophesying his passion and death, his disciples were arguing over who among them was the greatest. Jesus then spoke to them about what it means to be a leader: "*If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*" In the very next chapter, Jesus would define his own ministry in terms of service: "*For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many*" [10:45].

Several years ago, Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges co-authored *Lead Like Jesus*. Subsequently, Dr. Owen Phelps wrote *The Catholic Vision for Leading Like Jesus*. Because of Little Flower alumnus Chuck Finkbiner, Little Flower was privileged to host the first ever Catholic *Lead Like Jesus* Encounter on October 10, 2009. We then introduced *Lead Like Jesus* to our 8th grade class, and we continue to introduce each succeeding class to *Lead Like Jesus*. Little Flower Catholic School's tag line is "cultivating leaders with servant hearts."

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges define leadership as a process of influence [p. 4]. Whenever we are influencing others, we are in a leadership role. If you are like me, you keep track of birthdays and anniversaries on your calendar. On my calendar, no date has more birthdays and anniversaries than September 23rd. Today I would like to cite examples of the meaning of servant leadership by people on my calendar whose birthday or anniversary is today.

Today would have been my mother's 99th birthday. She demonstrated servant leadership by living out her vocation as wife and mother. Her Catholic faith was part of the fabric of her being. Although neither she nor my father had much formal education, they instilled in my brother and me the value of a college education. Certainly in hindsight, we recognize how much they sacrificed and were willing to sacrifice for us. Although her primary circle of leadership was her family, she continues to influence others through my brother and me.

Although I do not know what anniversary it would have been, today would have been the ordination anniversary of Fr. James Ethrington, my pastor when I was a deacon in London. Fr. Ethrington built the new St. Aidan's church in East Acton. Although it was a middle-to-working-class parish, much like Little Flower, everything in the church was a commissioned work of art. More importantly, in his earlier years, he was a powerful speaker in the Catholic Missionary Society.

Today would have been the 62nd wedding anniversary of Olive and Stan White, who were parishioners of St. Aidan's. Stan was an architect who left a firm he helped build when he discovered some less than honest business dealings. He also served St. Aidan's as President of the Parish Council.

Today is Fr. Paul Shikany's 59th birthday. Besides serving as pastor of St. Matthew Parish, he also serves as Vice Vicar Judicial of the Archdiocese and now coordinating chaplain for Chatard High School. Today is also Ann Tully's 59th birthday. Ann was in Fr. Paul's class here at Little Flower although she did not graduate from Little Flower. She worked as a paralegal before joining the Tribunal first as an Advocate and now as Judge Instructor for Fr. Paul.

Finally, today is our principal Kevin Gawry's 48th birthday. We all know that teachers and principals can make a lot more money in public schools. Kevin is a visionary educator. Also, he presents our *Lead Like Jesus* program to the 8th graders.

My brothers and sisters, all of us as Christians are called to be servant leaders. Most of us answer the call to be servant leaders by living out our concrete vocation. Today I would invite you to reflect on what it means to be a servant leader by reflecting on some important servant leaders who have influenced your life.