

Walking Humbly

Proverbs 25:6-7; Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14 9-2-07

More and more, as I advance through life, I am aware that we all have the ability to choose who and how we will be. We can't choose our genetic make-up, where we grow up, or the way we are raised—that is in the hands of others, but we can choose the way we respond to life and what comes our way.

We can allow ourselves to be defeated by many things, most of them small and petty, but we do not have to give in to what we cannot control. We need to learn to adapt, accept and move forward.

In Micah we are reminded what it is that God requires of us to live decent and fulfilling lives. While not one of this morning's readings, I am sure many of us remember his words. "He has showed you, O Mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

These seem to be three requirements we find hard to fulfill, especially the one that asks that we walk humbly with our God. This requirement finds further voice this morning in our readings from Proverbs and from the Gospel of Luke.

We are not always perfect in fulfilling the other two, either—acting with justice and even-handedness in dealing with others or even in meting out basic human kindness.

It seems that we can be terribly judgmental beings, unwilling to recognize the humanness of those around us—their inability to measure up to our expectations. It seems we cannot often cut another person a little slack for characteristics we may see and judge as flaws. I clearly remember someone once telling me they could "not support someone because of her fatal flaw." I was stunned, and I wondered which person had the most "fatal flaw"—the woman being spoken about or the person who so eagerly looked for such a flaw. I wondered how one determines that someone else's flaw is "fatal" rather than just a part of human nature.

But then, on the other hand, here are times when people simply surprise me and delight me by the kindness with which they treat one another. All events that might cause them to put on their armor and become defensive are forgotten and there is an air of ease and give and take and gentle indulgence for the foibles of others. Life becomes beautiful when we are able to accept others just where they are in life with all that is good, bad and, even ugly, and give one another the grace of love, space and understanding in which to grow. When this happens we can feel it in the air, and we sense that "God is in his heaven and that all is right with the world."

When we begin to treat one another in an even-handed, accepting way and begin extending generous measures of kindness, we find ourselves walking more humbly with our God through life, because we become more Christ-like. We begin to accept our place in life as members of a team in which every person is important and appreciated. No one is seen as better or lesser than another. We stop looking for fatal flaws in others and begin to work on our own flaws. We are all imperfect beings, and yet, God loves even us.

Jesus told us all of this in the message he sought to deliver to those closest to him and to people throughout the ages. He revealed to us the way God wants us to live and move and have our being. He reminded us in our reading from Luke that those who think too highly of themselves will be humbled and that those who have a proper perspective on life and their place in it are exalted. What more could we want than that?

The well-known little prayer of St. Francis of Assisi beautifully states what it is that makes up a life of walking humbly with our God.

That prayer is:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;*

*O Divine Master, grant that
I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

-- Amen