

**“The Son of Man did not come to BE served...BUT... TO serve.”**

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, Don Shula, then coach of the Miami Dolphins, was on vacation with his family in a small town in Maine. One rainy afternoon, Shula, his wife, and his 5 children decided to take in an afternoon matinee at the town’s only theater.

When they arrived, the ‘house lights’ were still on. There were only 6 other people present. So, when Shula & his family walked in, all 6 people stood up and applauded. He waved and smiled. As Shula sat down, he turned to his wife and said:

**“We’re a 1,000 miles from Miami and they’re giving me a standing ovation all the way up here. They must get the Dolphin games on T.V. here.”**

Just then, a man came up to shake Don’s hand. Don Shula beamed & said: **“How’d ya recognize me?”**

The man replied, **“Mister, I don’t know who you are. All I know is that, just before you & your family walked in, the manager told us, unless 4 more people came in, we wouldn’t have a movie today.”**

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I like that story because it clarifies the teaching of today’s 1<sup>st</sup> reading, namely, that our Christian commitment calls us to be humble people. **For example**, the kind of Christian Don Shula showed himself to be in that introductory story.

Here was a man whose reputation extended across the country, not only as an excellent coach, but also, as an excellent human being. It was only natural for Shula to think that the man, who came over to shake his hand, knew who he was. When it turned out that he didn’t, Shula was the first to laugh at himself. In fact, he enjoyed the incident so much that he shared it with others, even at banquets. Only a truly humble person would do a thing like that. ...which raises a question or two:

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**“Just what is humility? What’s it mean to be humble? Does it mean to put ourselves down? Does it mean to think little of ourselves? Does it mean to deny our true worth/to belittle ourselves?”** you ask.

**Well, I am glad you asked that question...or two!**

Does it mean any of those things?—Absolutely... **NOT!** Humility is something far more beautiful, something far more profound than anything like those things. Humility isn’t thinking little of ourselves. It’s not thinking of ourselves at all!

In its most profound and beautiful sense, humility means to be like Jesus, who said:

**“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”** <sup>Mt.11:29</sup>

It means to be like Jesus, who said:

**“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”** <sup>Mk.10:45</sup>

To be precise, humility means to live as Jesus lived—**NOT** for ourselves, **BUT** ...for others. It means to use our talents, as Jesus used his—**NOT** for ourselves or our own glory, but for others & their needs.

I will now illustrate this with an example:

Once upon a time, a fellow by the name of Charles Schulz made the 'Peanuts' character, Charlie Brown, a household word. Few people know, however, Charlie Brown is based on a real-life person. The real Charlie Brown had worked with Schultz in the Bureau of Engraving in Minneapolis.

Eventually, both men left the Bureau. Schultz became a cartoonist. Brown became a counselor for convicted, juvenile delinquents, often housing them in his own home. Charlie died of cancer in Dec., 1983. After his death, a co-worker wrote:

**“Charlie was my boss for 3 years at the Center.... After the kids were in bed, we passed the remaining hours of the evening-shift in long conversations. Charlie was a devout Roman Catholic. He saw his own life... as the doing of daily works of charity in imitation of Christ & the saints.”**

The co-worker went on to say:

**“Often the door bell or the phone would ring late at night. It was usually some boy asking, ‘Is Charlie Brown there?’”**

The co-worker also said that, during his stay at the Detention Center, not one young man, who lived with Charlie, ever returned to prison. And this was one of the reasons Charlie was frequently asked to give workshops for professionals and to lecture on penology & social work at the local university (of Minnesota).

Charlie Brown & Charles Schultz remained friends to the end. Schultz occasionally offered Charlie a share in the profits from some Charlie Brown spin-offs, like T-shirts & toys. Charlie never accepted a penny. Nor did Charlie ever volunteer to anyone that he was the REAL Charlie Brown.

And so, to this day, many of the kids, who rang the doorbell of the Detention Center late at night asking, ‘Is Charlie Brown there?’ had no idea whom they were asking for.

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That story is a living example of what Jesus means when he says:

**“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”**

It is a living example of what Jesus means when he says:

**“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”**

It is a living example of the power & the beauty of the virtue of humility, when lived out courageously in a truly Christian life.

It is a living example of the invitation Jesus holds out to you and me, here, this afternoon/morning!

I now close with words about humility from today's first reading:

**“My sons & daughters, ‘conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble [yourselves] the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.’”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.