

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].

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave his apostles a very practical example of servant leadership when he washed his disciples feet. After he washed their feet, he explained the meaning of servant leadership: "*You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet*" [Jn. 13:13-14]. Jesus then added a powerful motivation: "*Now that you know this, happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly*" [Jn. 13:15].

At the same time, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus also was very clear about what Christian leadership is not: "*You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you.*" [10:43-44a].

A man named Ken Blanchard is the co-author of a well-known book entitled *The One Minute Manager*. He also co-authored a book entitled *Lead Like Jesus*. Several years ago, one of our Little Flower School alumni, Chuck Finkbiner, worked with Ken Blanchard and others to develop a national Catholic leadership program based on Ken Blanchard's book and the example of Pope John Paul II. Some of you may remember that some years ago, Little Flower hosted the first Catholic *Lead Like Jesus* program, and for several years the Catholic *Lead Like Jesus* program was offered to our 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Ken Blanchard and his co-author, Phil Hodges, define leadership as a process of influence [p. 4]. Whenever we are influencing others, we are in a role of leadership. As Christians, we are all called to be servant leaders like Jesus both in personal relationships and in organizations and communities. In families, husbands and wives have a profound influence on each other, and parents have a profound influence on their children. In all the communities or organizations to which we belong, we should be seeking to call forth the best in them both by word and example. According to Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, "Servant leadership is to be a living statement of who we are in Christ, how we treat one another, and how we demonstrate the love of Christ to the whole world" [p. 12].

From their perspective, there are two kinds of leaders: servant leaders and self-serving leaders. What keeps us from leading like Jesus is usually fear or pride. Self-serving leaders seek to protect themselves and, therefore, fear losing power and control. Self-serving leaders seek to promote themselves and, therefore, seek power and control.

Today's Old Testament and New Testament readings suggest a quality of servant leadership and a quality of self-serving leadership. In today's first reading, the wicked conspired against Jeremiah because he challenged their beliefs and way of life. Servant leaders have integrity. They speak the truth in love and live the values of Jesus even when it is not popular, even when it is costly. Today's second reading suggests that self-serving leaders allow themselves to be ruled by disordered passions: jealousy, selfish ambition, covetousness, and envy, for example.

My brothers and sisters, to be servant leaders like Jesus, we have to entrust our lives and our futures to Jesus and to his word of promise. We have to make Jesus the true center of our lives and allow ourselves to be led by him.