

Character

15th Sunday C

I asked a young man 16 years old what it means to be a man of character and he said with no hesitation “A man of character does the right thing when no one is watching”.

According to Tolstoy, a drama does not tell us the whole of a person’s life. What it does is place a person in a situation. Then, from the way the person deals with the situation, their character is revealed. I love that!

This is what happens in today’s gospel. The priest, the Levite and the Samaritan are in a situation. They are faced with a decision: to stop and help the wounded man, or to continue on about their own business. There is no escape for them and no place to hide. They have to commit themselves one way or another. The priest and the Levite decide to pass by, the Samaritan decides to stop and help.

A good example for me was 9/11. I say that because a crisis does not create character, it merely reveals it. In times of crisis people reveal what is already inside them. The generous person or the selfish person, the hero or the coward, I saw both that day.

What we can see with two men in today’s gospel is that they were self-centered. They would not put themselves out to help another person. When the crunch came, they put themselves first.

I could stand here and tell you many stories of people I have met that this is them. It is all about them. They think that the universe revolves around them. This then has an effect in not only their life but the lives of everyone they deal with.

What about the Samaritan? Simple, he was caring. Again I have so many great stories about people I know that are just like this.

Life is continually testing us. Every day we are tested in little ways, and then some times in big ways. These tests reveal the kind of person we are-fundamentally unselfish or fundamentally selfish.

Those big moments are rare, and few could perform them. But we get many small, less spectacular opportunities to show care and concern for another human being in need.

Every little action shapes our character.