

**To Look into the Mirror**  
**Homily for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (9-1-13)**

In my last parish, the bell to the rectory rang late one evening. I opened the door to find a family needing assistance. They were my first face-to-face encounter with what our government calls, "illegal aliens," people who have entered this country secretly, bypassing the laws of our immigration. Their story was a familiar one: the family will be separated due to the fact that one of the spouses is undocumented. Near Maywood is the suburb of Broadview which has a center for sending immigrants back to their native country, a place where the brokenness of humanity is keenly felt. This family knew that I had no easy solutions to their dilemma; they just needed a priest to pray with them.

I still look upon this scene, emblazoned in my memory, and see that image as a "mirror" into my own heart. I "saw" my own comfortable home and secure life as realities I have taken for granted and have never questioned. Yes, a man broke the laws of immigration, but he also was hired by an employer who also was breaking the law, setting into motion a "system of immigration" that has many complexities and no easy answers.

As I remember that experience of 10 years ago, I have a glimpse into my own humanity by asking myself: would I not do everything I could to feed my family, even if it meant entering a country illegally? This family became a mirror to my own vulnerability.

Jesus tells a parable that becomes a "mirror" for those invited and for the host. The invited "see" themselves as those guests who want to arrogantly push their way to the front of the table to be near the host; and the host "sees" himself as one who just wants to hobnob with those in the know. The parable compels the guests and host to "see" themselves in a way that will certainly cause discomfort.

The first reading blatantly teaches the truth of the parable: "humble yourself more and the greater you are." Choose the last seat...choose to be with those who are considered the last in society...choose to see yourself in the world's undesirables, the "les misérables," to quote Victor Hugo. These "misérables" become mirrors into the very mystery of Christ, who freely chose to take his place among the world's last, along the edges and hiddenness of life. The family that came to the rectory were hidden humans, beings in the dark of night, bringing a light for me to "see" humanity as I had never seen it before.

To the host Jesus says invite those who could not return the favor: the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Surely, we could add the undocumented immigrant who faces the terrible reality of having the family separated. Our government struggles with the problems of our immigration system and the eleven million undocumented human beings. Our Catholic social justice teachings are grounded in the absolute dignity of each and every human being from conception to natural death. To be pro-life is to want to safeguard the dignity of all human beings: the unborn, the sick, the poor, the abused, and the immigrant.

I ask you to think about supporting legislation that wants to promote the dignity of these undocumented men, women, and children by establishing a path to citizenship. Even if a political solution is agreed upon, we will always face the reality of people who will do anything to flee a country that will not allow them feed their families. Our Catholic social teachings also state clearly and emphatically that every human being has a right to the basic necessities of life, which most definitely includes food and shelter.

Jesus makes it crystal clear in the parable, and in many other places in the gospel, that we are to find a "place at the table" for the forgotten and hidden ones in our human family. To love one of the "least ones" is to see the face of God....they become a mirror into God's Face.