

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE C

Sir. 3: 17-18, 20, 28-29 + Psalm 68 + Heb. 12: 18-19, 22-24a + Luke 14: 1, 7-14

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: Sunday, August 28, 2016

As we continue our journey with Jesus up to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel, we learn today in this "school of discipleship" about the importance of Humility. The humble know their rightful place in the reign of God.

In the ancient world, and still too much so in this world, guests would be seated according to their status or importance in society, and it was a highly stratified society where places at table carried great social weight. It was a serious matter if one judged their place incorrectly. Rank and Status were based upon comparisons with others.

However, we have learned all too well that we establish our identity and measure our worth and success by comparing ourselves with others. We think: "The more you have the better you are." The Kingdom Jesus announces on his way to Jerusalem clearly marks a shift in this way of thinking. But the radical and revolutionary character of the Kingdom of God sees wealth and possessions as gifts of God, not a privilege or a right.

The Humble find their sense of self and their identity in God, not in comparison with another like themselves. This humility leads one to service, not to power. The humble are free, free from fear and free from clinging to fame and fortune.

Those who are truly humble seek to give glory and honor to God. They do not seek glory nor honor for themselves. The humble ones know they can never repay God for all God has given them, but they can be open to receive God's gifts and to share them with others.

Part of this lesson for disciples is addressed to guests and part to hosts. In speaking to guests, Jesus in Luke's Gospel suggests that those who are humble accept the truth that all is gift, and the only proper attitude is gratitude. The proud think they are worth more because of achievements, status, wealth or power; all of which they may well have. Yet they miss the point: status, wealth, or power are for the service of others--- for no other purpose whatsoever.

The tone of this parable in Luke's Gospel is drawn from a popular image of the end time---a wedding banquet.

It is God who invites us to the messianic wedding banquet in heaven, and all the guests at that most important table of all are poor. None of us can buy our way into the wedding banquet of heaven, none of us can purchase our salvation, all of us depend on God's saving power in Christ Jesus to lift us up.

We are given a foretaste of the wedding banquet in heaven every time we come as guests to this table. When we come to this table to be fed, we assume the posture of beggars, with our hands or tongues out begging to be fed by the Host, hungering for the divine life that only Jesus can give.

So, if we want to compare ourselves with others from God's vantage point, we are all of us poor, all of us in need of the salvation only God can bring in Christ.

In speaking to hosts, the message comes from a different perspective. Inviting the right people to dinner is crucial. Inviting the right people to the table of our lives is so important.

For the host, humility calls for a guest list that includes the hungry—those who hunger for bread to eat, those who hunger for healing, those who hunger for love. The people around the humble table are those, who in truth, need to be there. The host invites them, not because of what they can give to the host, nor to seek a favor in return.

However, today likes still dine with likes. The conversations at the tables of the like-minded serve only to reinforce their own views, and the circle tightens as they reciprocate invitations to one another.

Jesus proposes that we invite to tables in our homes, to the tables of our lives, and to this Eucharistic table those who are unlike us. From a stance of humility, such a host recognizes the bonded-ness shared through common humanity that is stronger than the differences in abilities or social position.

The humble host knows the truth that what worldly possessions they may have are in their possession not because they are better than anyone else, but because they have been chosen to be instruments of God's love. The humble host stores up treasure in heaven by feeding those who cannot repay the favor, and thus the humble host finds favor with God.

With the virtue of humility, we are able to sit in right relationship to each other. With the virtue of humility, we come to know the truth about ourselves—we see clearly our own unique gifts as well as our own particular weaknesses and flaws.

True humility is grounded in an earthy wisdom, a knowledge that all persons, no matter their circumstances, and all the created world share in an unbreakable interconnection of life given by God.

Our eyes are opened to see this truth as we are invited to this table by Jesus the Host and enter into communion with one another.

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