



August 28, 2022

## Twenty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time

*"For everyone who exalts themselves will be humble but those who humble themselves will be exalted. "Luke 14: 11*



Dear Friends,

When I was in College, I worked nights at a small elegant Italian restaurant in Berkeley. Professors from the University and other important local officials often dined there. One evening a tall athletic man and his girl friend came through the door. He said, *"Hi, I'm Regi Jackson."* He seemed to act as if I should know who he was. I offered my hand and said, *"Hi, I'm Ron Schmit."* When Josephine, the owner, came out from the kitchen, she was all excited. She took them to a semi-secluded table. I never was interested in baseball, (the only thing more boring to me is golf) so I was clueless. Josephine had to explain to me who he was.

My uncle Jerry, who is a priest, loved that story. He said we might think we are important in our circle in life until we move out of that circle. Then we find out there is a whole other world that doesn't know who we are.

The early fathers of the Church used to say we have two selves. The one self we can call the smaller self; or to use modern day psychological terminology we call the ego. The smaller self or ego is important. This self develops from our family of origin, our education, friends, experiences, it's the image of ourselves that we hold in our minds and present to the world. This self is necessary especially in the first half of life. It helps us get our bearings and direction. It forms the basis for our identity.

The smaller self though has a shadow side. It is always insecure. It is always comparing itself with others. It desires to be separate and superior. The smaller self fears that someone else might be better, so it is in endless competition with everyone. This self can never really be happy, because it cannot have enough, or be enough; it is on a relentless treadmill. The smaller self is constantly defending itself against perceived threats.

The other self is the true self. This is the self where Jesus invites us to live. There are two ways to discover the true self. One way is to find profound, self-transcending love. The other way I think many of us usually find the true self is we crash and burn. We lose a job, people disappoint us, things don't go according to our plans, we go through a divorce, we get seriously ill, or a loved one dies.

In the imagery of Jesus, we carry the cross. When we go through these things, we ask the fundamental religious questions: Is this all there is, or is there something else? Does my life have meaning or purpose? And is there anything after I die? As we ask these questions, we take our focus off ego concerns, and we find something else—the spark of the Divine deep inside. And everything we thought to be so important doesn't matter so much.

All of us are invited to the wedding feast of life. Jesus invites us to set aside the concerns of ego so we can feast at the table of love. What more could we desire? What reason for choosing the first seats? There is plenty for all no matter where we sit. There is nothing we shall lack. Whoever desires the first place should seat themselves in the last, and then God in his own time will say, *"Friend, go up to a higher, and then you will be honored by all who sit at table with you."* The places of honor at table should not be sought by ambition but humility, not by money but by holiness. As we gather around the table of the Lord let us set aside small concerns and focus on the feast of love

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*