



August 31, 2025

## Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

*"...when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind;  
blessed indeed will you be." Luke 14:13*



Dear Friends

A priest once told me of a wedding reception he attended. Rather than being treated like the lord and lady of the manor, the newly married couple chose to serve their guests. They felt that marriage as a sacrament is a witness to God's love. So, the menu was simple; they served a hearty soup with good bread. The couple themselves ladled the soup into the bowls of their guests. The priest said it was an amazing and loving celebration.

Our readings from the Book of Sirach and the Gospel of Luke offer us practical advice. They urge us toward humility, understanding, and generous hospitality. In Sirach the author counsels *"conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts."* (3:17) In Middle Eastern culture humility consists in setting oneself a step behind where one rightfully belongs in status. The one who practices this kind of humility will never risk claiming more status than is deserved. That would be shameful.

In our gospel reading Jesus has been invited by a leading Pharisee to a dinner on the Sabbath. This tells us that Jesus was accepted as an equal. But Luke gives us the strong impression that the people gathering have an agenda. They are hostilely observing Jesus. Preceding today's passage, Luke tells us that among the invited guests (seated opposite of Jesus) is a man who suffered from "dropsy." This is an antiquated term referring to someone with swelling around ankles, hands and limbs. Today we would call it edema.

Jesus turned to the self-appointed surveillance team and asks whether one should help or ignore someone in need on the Sabbath. They maintained a stoney silence. but Jesus expresses his powerful opinion by healing the man. After this incident is where our gospel reading begins.

Luke tells us that Jesus had been observing the guests as they were vying for the best seats of honor. Jesus, like Sirach offers the guests some advice on how to save face. He warns that their smug self-evaluation might not match the host's ranking on the guest list. Rather than face the embarrassment of being exiled to a lower place, they should humbly put themselves in a position to be invited up higher. Then he quotes a parable that tells us that *"those who exalt themselves will be humbled."* No one enjoys being around a self-important show-off.

We can imagine the difficulties the host faced dealing with all the competing egos. So, Jesus next offers advice to the host. This was bad manners and frankly shocking. Jesus challenges the host to invite people who cannot reciprocate the invitation. Such guests—the poor, the crippled, lame, and blind—are clearly of a lower social status than the host. They won't care where they sit just as long as there is food. However, to associate with such people would be dishonor of one's own social status. Then one's own equals will shun the host's future invitations. A host of means would be socially ruined.

But Jesus paints a picture of "true honor." Honor does not come from human judgment. God determines true honor at the resurrection of the righteous. God will personally reward the host who has been gracious to those who can't return the favor. This statement would have stung the Pharisees who believed in resurrection. Having set a trap for Jesus, they are themselves trapped by Jesus, whose teachings turn the world upside down.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

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