

# Homily for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 31-September 1, 2019

Readings: Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24A; Luke 14: 1, 7-14

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In today's gospel, Jesus gives two sets of instructions, the first to those who have been invited, then the second to him who does the inviting. We need to see ourselves in each group.

When Jesus addresses those who have been invited to the banquet, I am reminded of those few times when I was invited up to recline at the head table. An award. A scholarship. Recognition. They're wonderful memories. Today's readings even make me feel like they are gospel-y moments! In my delightfully human memory, I started humbly at the lower place and awaited the host's invitation: "My friend, move up to a higher position."

Yet, I've also sat for a long time at the other end of the table, waiting to be invited up. The promotions that don't come. The friends who don't call. The invitations that aren't received. I would like to say that I was humble, like in my muddled memories in the first instance, but really, I was humbled. What I thought should be mine didn't come.

When Jesus addresses those who have been invited, he is describing the world as it is and its secular values. We are rewarded and celebrated for certain things. We don't always get what we deserve. It is the world as it is; it is the world as we live in it. Others define us as we wait and react.

But when Christ addresses the man who did the inviting, it tells us more about Christ. It tells us how he wants the world to be. It's the part of the story where we get to be agents. We get to make decisions. We're no longer passive recipients of other's assessment of us.

The creation story in Genesis hasn't ended yet. We are always creating the world in union with God. Jesus is giving us instruction on how to create the world.

We are told to invite others to our table. We are to value people for the things God sees in them. In the first instruction, people were valued by secular values. In

the second instruction, it's different. We are not to let the world around us and its reactions to us determine who we are going to be. Who we are is determined by the values we choose to live by.

The weekly Eucharist is both a reminder of this and a celebration of this. Some see the obligation to attend Mass weekly as an unnecessary rule imposed by authority. But it's not. It's when we don't want to be present at the Eucharist when we most need the church to remind us that we are already at God's banquet. It is when we are blind to that, crippled by sin or heartache, unable to walk in of our own energy that we rely on the Church to get us there by saying, "There's no need to make a decision. Just do it." And there, in receiving the body of Christ, we remember that we are more than how we are seen by those who fail to invite us to their place of honor in the world. We are children of God awaiting the resurrection of the righteous.

Then we leave and we find ourselves back at the end of that first table, back to our humble place. We're in the world as it is. It right there where we can act on Christ's instruction. You don't have to hold the banquet to change the dynamics in the banquet.

We are able to become an inviter where we are. We can Invite the one who sits at the end of the table with us. Does the person next to you know they are adored by God? Attentively listening to their boring story can communicate that love. Does the person next to you know that God forgives even the most heinous sins to bring them to new life? Forgiving them their transgressions against you can communicate a slice of the power of God's forgiveness. Does the person next to you know that God provides in our darkest hour of need? Giving to them with cheer and blessing allows them to thank God as well as you. Does the person next to you know that God loves them at their worst? Patiently bearing their wrongs can communicate that to them.

We are invited to live the Genesis story of creation daily at our humble end of the banquet table. "Blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."