

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Sep 1st 2013

PRE-PRAYERING

“Excuse me” has several meanings in polite company. It is used when bumping into somebody accidentally. It is employed to interrupt somebody who is speaking and the listener wishes to interject a thought or two. It is spoken when a person wishes to move away from a discussion to move elsewhere. It can be a request after a belch.

We can ask to be excused from classes, jury duty, and other invitations to which we would rather stay home. We enjoy being selective with the responses we make to various invites.

As we prepare to respond to the Eucharistic Invitation to “come and eat”, we might pray with the many invitations God sends us through life’s experiences. Fear, inferiority, anger, vengeance and laziness all can be excuses by which we say “no!” to the adventures of trusting God. We can pray with the invitations to involve ourselves with the needs of others, with the calls upon our gifts in service of the poor. We can pray with the joys of how we have responded and what gifts we have received in return.

REFLECTION

The spirit of today’s readings flows from the continuation of Luke’s Gospel and how Jesus continues offering reversals. Our First Reading from Sirach echoes traditional Jewish teachings concerning right conduct. Basically these verses say, “Remember who you are and who you are not.”

Remember you are gifted by a Divine Giver and when you remain peacefully grateful you will experience being loved by God and others.

A wise person listens deeply with both the outer and inner ears. The wise person searches and allows mystery to be a friend rather than a humiliating enemy which must be defeated or ignored. As water can subdue flames, generosity to the poor extinguishes the fire of past sins.

These are instructive and practical. Keeping them remains a work in progress. Humility is gratitude

which allows us to stay at home in our own shoes. Covering up or withdrawal is not being humble or shy, it is a prideful expression that we really should have been created with more gifts and until they appear, we will not.

Luke has Jesus responding to an invitation to dine at a leading Pharisee's house and on the Sabbath. Two red flags then appear in the first line. The other invitees are watching quite specifically to trap him violating their religious expectations, early forerunners of "Liturgical Police". During the meal Jesus notices the pharisaical practices of these religious rigorists. They have been jockeying for places of honor and recognition. Jesus heightens their interest in him by relating a little parable intended to indicate their hypocrisy.

Though it is about table manners and where one should sit upon entering the place for dining, it is much more about how one sits at the table of life. The invited to life are to remember they are in fact invited and have no entitled rites other than to eat what is placed before them and sit where they find themselves. The Inviter to the feast of life will bless those who have eaten well and thankfully for the whole meal. This blessing is the Host's saying, "My friend, move up to a higher position."

The "higher position" would be a place of honor, which, in Luke's way, means a place of distribution to the needy of the even more gifts received at God's table. This image is made more clear as Jesus then turns to the host of the dinner and speaks to him about whom he should invite to such dinners.

Jesus states clearly to the host that when he invites his friends and the wealthy to dine, they can repay you and you have your reward. Use your dining facilities and wealth to care for those who can not repay you here, but the Divine Host Who has set your table, will then repay you in the eternal banquet of the just. The response of one of the guests, which we do not hear, follows these words of Jesus. The guest remarks that the blest will eat in the Kingdom of God. Jesus turns to him and what he says is in next-week's Gospel, stay tuned.

That which makes a person truly attractive is an interior at-homeness, which is humility. Just as sitting beside a quietly flowing stream is comforting, accompanying persons who are comfortable with their interior rests us. Being with those who are anxious about who they are seem always distracted and want to be somewhere else so as to be someone else perhaps. Humility is truth in action, generosity in public, and joyfulness in being invited.

“Lord, how great is the depth of the kindness which you have shown to those who love you.” Ps. 31,
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