

22nd Sunday OT – Luke 14:1, 7-14

"Take The Lower Place"

In today's gospel we find *Jesus at table*.

-The reader of the prophets would be reminded of the *banquet* promised for the end of times.

-Luke's reader would be put in mind of the *Eucharist*, the "breaking of the bread" in his own community.

-The person of Greek culture would remember that it was at *table* that many teachers found their opportunity to pass on their instruction and wisdom.

At first sight, the teaching that Jesus gives seems to be very much worldly wisdom. True honor is that which other people give us, not the honor which we seek for ourselves. This can even go wrong and bring us shame. But the teaching is called a parable, so it is likely that its point is not confined to feasts in this world, but to the *banquet in the Kingdom*, the feast that really matters!

The person who does not seek honor for self, like the slave whom the master finds at work when he arrives, will be called to a higher place in heaven. Like the tax collector in the temple, he will be exalted. He will be like Jesus who was present at the Last Supper as "One who serves" and whose whole life was a self-emptying.

Jesus goes on to teach what is certainly not wisdom for this world. He tells his fellow guests to invite to their feasts the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. These cannot possibly repay such generosity. Repayment is promised at the Resurrection of the righteous: God himself will repay.

The gospel tells how God through Christ shows his care for the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Jesus teaches what he taught in the Sermon on the Plain. The true Christians are those who are merciful as God himself is merciful, and who know that they are descendants of the poor, the lame, and the blind whom Jesus invited to his banquet.

The Reflection in Give Us This Day is by St. Bruno of Segni, Abbot of Montecassino Benedictine monastery. He writes, "Do not be lifted up by pride, inflated by knowledge, elated by nobility, but the greater you are the more you must humble yourself in every way, and you will find grace with God." And then he quotes several Old Testament examples like Moses who requested that the Lord send someone else, or Jeremiah who tried to back out by saying "I cannot speak – I am only a child." And then St. Bruno ends with, "In the Church, then, the first seat, or the highest place, is to be sought not by ambition but by humility; not by money but by holiness."

It is hard to find such people today, but they are here and there. The reason one cannot find them is that they are successful in practicing true humility that they remain hidden. And sometimes they are people right under our nose. My mom and my dad were just such persons and I am sure you can recall others yourself. Even though my mom never earned a degree, she was well read, from Pearl Buck to Catherine de Hueck Doherty.