

August 28, 2022
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 14:1, 7-14

On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him closely.

He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table: “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the places of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. “Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Then he said to the host who invited him, “When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Background:

In last week’s gospel, Jesus was asked how many would be saved. His response focused not on how many would be saved; but on the quality of one’s relationship with God. The gospel concluded with Jesus stating that in the final realm of God... “Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” (Luke 13:30) You may also remember that someone in the crowd reminded Jesus that they had eaten and drank with Jesus, as a way of claiming a relationship with Jesus that entitled them to be counted among the elect. The importance of table fellowship in this culture is part of the cultural background for the gospel for this Sunday.

Immediately after last Sunday’s text, Luke describes how some Pharisees come to Jesus and urge him to leave the area because Herod is seeking to kill him. Jesus mourns for the people of Jerusalem in a way that hints of his future rejection and death. Luke then returns to the Pharisees’ regard of Jesus, and describes an incident where a leading Pharisee has invited Jesus to a dinner at his house. That account is the gospel text for this Sunday.

The first line of the gospel sets the background for the unfolding of the rest of the text and is important for understanding the text. The Sabbath dinner was an opportunity to invite non-family members to dinner and a time to engage in theological discussions. Jesus had been invited by a leading Pharisee, a group that believed in spirits and life after death. That Jesus was being carefully watched would not have been out of place. The second line of the gospel states that Jesus was also watching the guests and how they were selecting their places.

The gospel suggests that being invited to a dinner at that time was a very different experience from what most of us are accustomed to. It was perhaps more like a wedding banquet where each guest is assigned a seat at a table. Those at the head table or closest to it would be the more important guests. But at the time of Jesus, those at the head table with the host would not only be served first, but also a better quality of food. Those further down the line would receive a simpler meal. The host would also provide the entertainment for the evening that may range from some discussion to a contest or presentation. Guests were expected to participate in whatever the host had selected as the entertainment. Accepting an invitation from someone was also accepting the responsibility to return an invitation to the host. There were many pieces of information one needed to consider before accepting an invitation in this culture.

In the gospel, Jesus' own behavior breaks with custom and would have been considered improper. The first parable criticizes the behavior of the guests who are seeking out the places of honor at the table, and it points to the absurd practice of trying to achieve recognition of one's status from the host. In doing so, one may find themselves publicly humiliated for presuming one's status.

The second short parable begins with verse 10 and is directed toward the host as the one who has invited those gathered. Again, Jesus suggests that the host not follow the traditionally accepted practice of inviting people with the expectation that they will, in turn, invite him to their table. Rather, he suggests inviting those who have no hope of being able to return the gesture, but who can do great harm to one's reputation.

In both cases, Jesus does not suggest that the system of placing people in positions of honor be abolished, or that people not invite others to their table as way of gaining honor. He does, rather, reverse how people attempting to use these systems are to gain the esteem of their host and others. Not said, but implied, is the suggestion that those who believe in eternal life ought to focus on one's status before God.

Reflection Questions:

1. What were your childhood family meals like? What structure was there to those meals?
2. What is the most formal dinner celebration you have been invited to? What was that experience like for you? What are some of the details you remember about that occasion?
3. How many different times do you recall Jesus attending meals in the gospels? Is that suggesting anything to you?
4. How many times in the gospel do recall Jesus feeding others? What are those settings? Is that suggesting anything to you?
5. What thoughts come to mind as you think of Jesus going to dinner with a leading Pharisee?
6. If you had been present at the gathering described in today's gospel, what would have been some of the feelings going through you as this dinner unfolded?
7. How would you feel about inviting Jesus to your dinner table tonight?
8. Can you take some time to talk to God about how important your reputation is to you, or how important the reputation of others is to you, or some other feeling or memory that arose within you from this text?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for August 28, 2022, the Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.

What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not.
The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise.
Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor. The just rejoice and exult before God.
Sing to the Lord, chant praise to his name. The father of orphans and the defender of widows
is God in his holy dwelling. God gives a home to the forsaken; he leads forth prisoners to prosperity.
A bountiful rain you showered down, O God, upon your inheritance; you restored the land
when it languished; your flock settled in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided it for the needy.

Brothers and sisters: You have not approached that which could be touched
and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words
such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them.
No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven,
and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator
of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people
there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited,
noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table.

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the
place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him,
and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,'
and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place.

Rather, take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend,
move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.

For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Then he said to the host, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers
or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment.

Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind;
blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.

For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Excerpts from Sirach 3:17-20, 28-29; Psalm 68:4-11; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24; and Luke 14:1, 7-14

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for August 28th, as prepared by Franciscan
spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the gospel from Luke, Jesus has instructions about humility for both
guests and hosts at a dinner. "When you are invited to a banquet, do not recline at the place of honor. A more
distinguished guest may have been invited. Take the lowest place. The host may say, 'My friend, move up to a
higher position.' The one who humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus also said to the host, "When you hold a

dinner, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. You will be blessed because of their inability to repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The other readings also have references to humility before man and God, and to providing for those who cannot repay, and to the rewards for these things being great in heaven. In the first reading from Sirach, we are told, "Conduct your affairs with humility. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. An attentive ear is the joy of the wise, and alms atone for sins." Psalm 68 declares, "God gives a home to the forsaken. In your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy." In the second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, we are reminded, "You have not approached that which could be touched, and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness. You have approached the city of the living God, and countless angels, and the assembly in heaven, and God, and Jesus."

Joe