

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time
August 28, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

In our message from Jesus today, we find that He has been invited to dine with a leading Pharisee, and Christ is being watched closely by the attendees. Christ notices how the attendees are choosing their places at table. They are attempting to follow the pecking order of the time with the most important person getting the best seat or position and lesser individuals getting places of less importance. Initially I had the impression Jesus, in telling His parable, was giving some instruction in social mores for those attending (especially in the first part of His parable). Of course, He had something far more important than the customs and conventions of the Jewish community in mind. He was sharing a message regarding their salvation. It's a message for each of us – as well as those who attended the meal. The Pharisees and others in attendance at this dinner party which must have included the wealthy, the politically powerful, intellectuals and other socially powerful people.

Actually, some Pharisees could fit all those categories. It isn't hard to visualize that being humble was not high on the list of their repertoire of behavior. And, you know, I'm sure we have all been proud of achievements in our lives, perhaps the achievements of our friends or loved ones. Things our children or grandchildren have done may be impressive. Bishop Barron quoting St. Paul said, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" Humility is our way of remembering that everything is a gift from God. And, as Bishop Barron noted, "Humility is not a degradation, but an elevation!" However, in this gathering for a meal, the attendees are so involved in the social conventions; they seem to be oblivious to some very simple realities of their own faith. God had provided the bounty for their meal, their very lives, their health, their social positions, their wealth. There was nothing that had not been provided as a gift from their maker. Yet, they play this game of pecking order, this game of ranking. Like all men who offer reasons to not follow Jesus, these Pharisees artificially determined their own importance, in their own community, who is held in highest esteem and those who follow. Have they have forgotten God?

Christ advises those in attendance, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." The meaning seems clear enough; those who understand and acknowledge that everything is a gift from God will naturally be humble. None of humanity has real cause to feel any other way than grateful. Grasping the basic truth that everything we have is a gift from God. This is truly reason to be humble. And, if we keep Christ close to us, we will always remember to be grateful.

As St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta advised us, "Let nothing come between you and Jesus." When you let nothing come between you and God's love, brothers and sisters, you will make the right choices and you will remain humble. I pray we will all remember. Peace be with you.