

assumed the condition of a servant
and welcomed the outcast and poor;
let such a humility be exalted among us.
Let us not refuse those whom the world rejects
but have eyes to discern your presence in them
and hope of their fellowship
in the resurrection of the dead.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect for Year C, Proper 17²

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year C

Proper 17

(Sunday between 28 August and 3 September inclusive) •
Ordinary Time, Week 22

Principal Service readings

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| Ecclesiasticus 10.12-18 or Proverbs 25.6-7 | Stages of pride |
| Psalm 112 | In praise of the upright |
| Hebrews 13.1-8,15,16 | Living in faithfulness and integrity, the sacrifice of praise |
| Luke 14.1,7-14 | The poor are invited to the wedding banquet |

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Parable of choosing places at table

¹On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. ⁸ ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place,” and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, ‘When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your

² *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals, Years A, B and C* / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-2005.

relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid.¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Luke 14.1,7-14 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Jesus notices that the guests at the meal he is attending choose places for themselves at the 'top table', as it were. He doesn't challenge their behaviour directly, but through a parable. In the parable he describes an imaginary wedding banquet. If you were going to such an event and there were no place labels where would you sit yourself?

Jesus gives a warning for those who might place themselves higher up, according to how they perceive their status. Those who imagine themselves to be important would be likely to place themselves higher up the 'pecking order'. How embarrassing to be told to move down a few places!

On the other hand, those who place themselves low down in the order might be shown favour by the host, who would ask them to 'move up higher'. The use of the term 'friend', indicates an intimacy between host and guest that is denied to those who 'exalt themselves'. Have you been at a social event where people have shown such humility; or have you been aware of those who 'exalt themselves'? What has been your response in such situations?

After he has told the parable, Jesus goes on to give advice to his host directly. He tells his host not to invite friends and family to meals but, rather, the poor and disadvantaged – they cannot reciprocate. Do we reach out or include such marginalised people in our activities? Do we think about benefitting now or about rewards in heaven?

Quotations

1

Who is free from defects? He lacks everything who thinks he lacks nothing.

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2

St Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090–1153

2

Whoever grounds his virtue in humility, shall never go wrong.

Jan van Ruysbroeck, 1293–1381

3

We do not have to acquire humility. There is humility in us – only we humiliate ourselves before false gods.

Simone Weil, 1909–1943

4

Humility, therefore, does not consist in forever trying to abase ourselves and renounce the dignity which God gives us and demands of us because we are his children not his slaves. Humility as we see it in his saints is not born solely of their awareness of sin, because even a sinner can bring to God a broken and contrite heart and a word of forgiveness is enough to blot out all evil from the past and the present.

The humility of the saints comes from the vision of the glory, the majesty, the beauty of God. It is not even a sense of contrast that gives birth to their humility, but the consciousness that God is so holy, such a revelation of perfect beauty, of love so striking that the only thing they can do in his presence is to prostrate themselves before him in an act of worship, joy and wonder. When the great experience of the overwhelming love that God has for us came to St Teresa, she was struck to her knees, weeping in joy and wonder; when she arose she was a new person, one in whom the realization of God's love left her 'with a sense of unpayable debt'. This is humility – not humiliation.

Anthony Bloom, *Meditations on a Theme* (A.R. Mowbray, 1972), p. 68

Related topics

For further study:

Theology of eucharist; justice; discipleship; morality; sin; trust

Closing Prayer

God of the lowly,
whose eternal Son

3