The Summit Online Exploring the Word

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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On a sabbath day Jesus had gone for a meal to the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you would have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." In that way, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Then he said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations or rich neighbours, for fear they repay your courtesy by inviting you in return. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; that they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again.'

(Luke 14:1,7-14)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Scripture, as we have noted before, the wedding feast—a time of joyous celebration and abundance—is one of the traditional images of the kingdom of God.
- At the time of Jesus, society was organised along strictly hierarchical lines. People were very sensitive to their status in society and how they were treated.
- Pharisees are one among a number of groups within Jewish society. They were especially observant of the law and were influential in society.

EXPLORING THE WORD

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is often depicted as sharing meals with people who were not considered at that time and in that culture to be appropriate table companions: publicans, tax collectors, sinners and women of dubious reputation. In this meal, Jesus reveals more of the radical reversal that is characteristic of God's way. He challenges the way the Pharisees see their own standing in society as people of status, urging them instead to take the more humble positions at table and to allow the host, or God, to choose those who should be exalted. He also shatters the Pharisees' idea of table fellowship by urging them to share their festive table with those who are the least important or the outcasts of society. The way to God cannot be organised according to human priority! It is in the ultimate humiliation of crucifixion that Jesus is exalted in resurrection and ascension.

- What challenges does this text offer to society today or to the Church, which sometimes excludes people of 'inappropriate status' from the Eucharistic table?
- Who are treated as the 'least important' in our modern world? Who are treated as the 'most important' in our modern world? Do we need to offer a critique of this?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you appreciate all things while expecting nothing?
- · What does honour mean to you?
- · How do you repay kindnesses done to you?
- Share a story (and enjoy the humour of hindsight) about an embarrassing moment you have experienced!
- Offer table fellowship and share a meal with someone who would appreciate your company this week.
- Use today's collect as your prayer this week:
 - God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured.

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SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Just as Jesus challenged the social norms and the leadership of his day, the Church continues to challenge society. The social teaching of the Church is often called its best-kept secret! In the modern period, the great landmark document *Rerum Novarum*, issued in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII, marked the beginning of what has become a long and illuminating tradition for the Catholic Church. Successive popes have added to this tradition of offering a critique of social, political and economic structures in the light of the Gospel.

- An excellent resource on Catholic Social Teaching is the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Explore together some of the themes that are dealt with in this book.
- You could look at Pope Francis' social encyclical on environmental concern, Laudato Si. This is very readable and of a practical nature. Discuss how this document can be implemented in your community or in people's lives and homes.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has nominated a number of Sundays during the year on which to draw attention to those who are marginalised in our society (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, Refugee and Migrant Sunday, etc.) or to issues of importance to all (such as Social Justice Sunday).

 Look at some of the recent statements made by the Australian Catholic Bishops in which they challenge the society of our day. The <u>Australian Bishops' Conference</u> <u>website</u> is a good source of material of a local nature.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Jesus is often portrayed in Luke's Gospel at table and sharing a meal. Meals play a significant role in human interaction and celebration. Jesus challenges both the conventions of his society and the understanding of who should be considered 'important' and of highest place in this text. Instead, he invites the Pharisees, and us too, to consider the poorest and most in need as our table companions, just as he did.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

 In what ways does your community welcome those who are 'the least' in our society? Are there ways that table fellowship can be made more welcoming and accepting in your community practice of the Eucharist? Try a meal (or morning tea) setting for prayer. Pray for those in your family with whom you share your table. Pray for each other as you gather here. A suitable song could be 'Come to the feast' (GA 400). Conclude with the prayer of exorcism at RCIA §94K.

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