

## Twenty Second Sunday in ordinary Time year C

Luke 14:7-14

It does not explicitly say, but perhaps Mary accompanied Jesus to this dinner. Some theologians surmise, based on

- their unique relationship
- the lack of references to Joseph after Jesus leaves home  
that Mary accompanied Jesus throughout his public ministry.

Because of the real possibility, in this situation,

I keep having recurrent visions of Mary giving Jesus the strong parental eye – as Jesus begins to spout corrections to both guests and host – and quipping discreetly, “Jesus, mind your manners!”

Perhaps Jesus just slips and steps out of bounds on occasion, offering advice that misses the mark.

From the looks of it, Jesus has little sense of entertaining.

*Firstly*, he does what no guest should *ever* do: *criticize*.

“Oh goodness, your sofa looks tired, and these shrimp are soggy...”

*Secondly*, the content of his criticism shows that he clearly has not been reading “Miss Manners” or “*Mister Manners*”.

Well, actually, the criticism of the guests, the first criticism, is probably passable.

According to social custom of the time, social rank was very much on display at meals.

Jesus has little patience for such games.

Jesus basically says,

“If you play the game, you will probably be *embarrassed* by the game.”

Jesus wants these guests (and the host) to realize what a celebration ought to be.

A celebration is not about grabbing places of honor.

A real celebration is an equal-opportunity experience, in which we honor *one another*.

Jesus’ second criticism is the clincher; and it must have left the host speechless.

Jesus offers a sure-fire recipe for a killer dinner party.

Jesus basically says,

“What were you thinking when you invited *these* people?

You should have invited the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

Now *that’s* a party.”

Next thing we know, Jesus will have a show on the food network.

It is truly amazing how Jesus goes directly to the heart of the matter.

As disturbing as it may initially be,

Jesus does so because he knows those present can handle it.

Remember: when Jesus acts strongly,

it always implies an act of trust in those with and for whom he acts strongly.

In other words, we always witness a dose of wise parenting in Jesus.

“Let’s move it along; you can grow.”

Keep also in mind that this is a *parable*, told to these “diners”  
who “were observing him carefully”, i.e. were slightly cynical in his regard.  
Jesus takes hold of this dining experience and makes use of it parabolically  
to break open their world to something of the reality of the kingdom.  
A parable is never a simple lesson in good living.  
A parable is a revelation of *God*.

The question then is: What occurs at “meals” in the kingdom?  
In other words,

- What is to happen at gatherings between those who subscribe to the King?
- What is to happen between Brothers and Sisters in Christ?

If we really read the parable, we notice, interestingly, that

- at times we play the role of *guest*
- at times we play the role of *host*.

We are welcomed and let ourselves be fed.

We welcome and we feed.

And we engage in this lovingly fraternal activity  
knowing that it is ultimately Christ at work.

All the while recognizing

- the wondrous individuality of our Brothers and Sisters
- the full involvement of our Brother and Sisters

we know, in faith, that through them it is

- *Christ* who welcomes us
- *Christ* who feeds us

Such is the Mystical Body.

Such is the generosity of God.

If this is true, then we humble ourselves so that we can be received all the more.

As the 1<sup>st</sup> reading from the book of Sirach states, we “conduct our affairs with humility,  
knowing that we can then “be loved more than a giver of gifts”.

If this is true, then the table of our hearts is open

- to all
- to all those Jesus whom mentions in this parable
- to those who deal with financial issues and health issues and divorce issues  
and sexual issues and political issues and church issues

Those who belong to the King

Those who have “approached

- Mount Zion, the city of the living God
- the heavenly Jerusalem
- countless angels in festal gathering
- the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven
- God, the judge of all” (2<sup>nd</sup> reading: Hebrews 12:22-23)  
cannot close their hearts.

To do so is to betray the love deposited therein, a love that, by virtue of its source,  
is endless and banishes fear.

We must trust that the Lord provides for our hearts.

We must trust that the Lord will love

through our sometimes narrow, sometimes broken hearts.

We must trust that we can walk on the water of his love.

Ask yourself, “Who in my life has been getting the short end of the “stick” of this love?”

Then ask for the grace to be generous and fearless in love.

Dare to go there.

It is daunting.

It will bring you to your knees.

And it will set you free.