

*Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church*

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

August 29, 2010

Readings:

Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Fr. Bob

The first line, of our first reading, sets the tone for a theme in the readings today. From the Book of Sirach, we're told, "conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts." In humility, one aspect, is putting others first and looking after their needs. And so it's something that gains respect when people can say that about us. And the idea is certainly followed up in our Gospel reading, when Jesus mentions a wedding banquet, and talks about taking a lesser seat, and not assuming our own importance over others who have been invited to the same banquet. Instead, we should wait, to see if the host invites us to a seat of honor. And then he mentions another banquet of sorts. And it also has to deal with humility. There is certainly nothing wrong, with inviting friends to enjoy a meal. There is nothing wrong about eating with people we care for. But Jesus still takes it a step further, when he talks about throwing a feast, for the outcasts of the day, the poor, and the crippled and the blind, because they don't have the resources, to pay back the host or to respond in kind. They also cannot increase our stature in terms of society because they are the powerless ones, the ones without influence.

And within that image, another idea of humility: doing something just for the sake of doing it, and not expecting anything in return. Doing something that is good, for its own sake, and not for ours. Adopting an attitude, sometimes very difficult to do, of not looking for repayment, or not looking for reward, or looking for our own personal gain. Again, an attitude that is sometimes very difficult, especially in our world. There is something about our nature, that wants praise, that wants people to see our goodness. There's something about our nature that says we want to be recognized for our goodness. But we have something today, that hopefully drives home the point that Jesus is trying to make. And it's our gathering at this mass. In the strictest sense we are not necessarily poor even though finances are often stretched to a breaking point. In the strictest sense, we are not crippled or lame in the sense that we cannot move, because all of us, some with help have all managed to make it here today. But Christ throws a banquet for us, and not because we are above anyone else.

Perhaps there are different roles that are performed, but ask Christ who is more important, and we know from another reading that he will pick a child. And we all come here, just as we are and perfection is not something that any of us have a claim to. All of us, in some ways that are obvious, but also in ways that are not, are flawed and probably most of us, invited to a banquet, would not dare to take over a place of honor because we know our weaknesses all too well. But still, we are the ones that Christ has invited and that calls for another aspect, another type of humility. It's knowing, that we've been invited in the first place and it's knowing that we are welcome, despite ourselves and who we are in our imperfections. It's a type of humility in which we admit, that Christ does call us forward, and that Christ gives us our dignity, and Christ is the one, not us, who makes us worthy. And in his banquet we receive a gift of the presence of Christ. We receive the gift of the invitation to be in his presence. And he gives us a great favor by allowing us to be here. And today, in our Gospel, he asks us to be humble, and to remember that gift. And the Gospel also asks one other thing of us. To return the favor and to offer our own invitation to others.