

PASTOR'S CORNER

In today's Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus observes people choosing where they would sit at a banquet, and uses the opportunity to teach them about humility: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." I believe that if we looked at our own lives, we could testify to the truth of Jesus' statement from our own experience.

And our own experience tells us that it is God who does the exalting, and it is God who does the humbling. Sometimes we try to be in charge of the process. There are times when we may calculate that if we humble ourselves we will be exalted. But if we try to do that, we are still trying to exalt ourselves. Sometimes there are others who want to do the humbling, but that is usually done out of malice or envy, and it does not work, either.

What can help us come to an attitude of true humility? Turning to Jesus. Jesus says to the host who invited Him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." If we were to consider these words in terms of the heavenly banquet, or in the context of the Mass, could we not see that Jesus practices what He preaches? Has not Jesus invited *us*, even when we have been poor, or crippled by anxiety or fear, or made lame by grief and sorrow, or even blinded by resentment or selfishness? Has not Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, without any expectation, or even possibility, of repayment? Does not Jesus constantly call us, even when we are in sin, to Himself?

When we reflect on how Jesus humbled Himself out of love for us, our only response can be humility. There can be no pretending to be better than or more important than someone else. We are all in need of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ! As we are humble before the love of God, so are we to be humble with each other. It is true that we are all children of God, "wonderfully made", as it says in Psalm 139. But that is no cause for exaltation above others. It is cause for gratitude to a God who loves us so! We need to let go of the pride that gets in the way of following Jesus and doing God's will; the pride that fools us into thinking we know best. We need to forego that kind of spiritual "jockeying for position," trying to outdo others, as if God played favorites. Instead, we are to give honor to others, and welcome others to join us, even if the world deems them unimportant.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we be humble before Him.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil Paxton, CP