Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 14:1,7-14): On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully.

He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said 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."

"Noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table."

Fr. Enric PRAT i Jordana
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Today, Jesus teaches a masterly lesson: do not choose the best seat: "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor" (Lk 14:8). Jesus knows we like to look for the best places: in official acts, informal gatherings, at home, at the table. He knows our trend to overrate ourselves out of vanity, or worse still, out of a poorly hidden pride. So let us therefore be careful with honors, for "the heart remains chained where it finds the possibility of delight" (Saint Leo the Great).

Perhaps others have told us that we are better persons in general, or that we have better personal qualities than others. We may even begin to consider ourselves smarter, more important, and more deserving than others —always the rightful ones. This can lead to a narrow vision of ourselves and of

those around us. Against this, Jesus invites us to practice perfect humility, consisting in not judging ourselves or others, but being conscious of our individual insignificance from a global perspective.

Thus, Jesus, proposes to us, by precaution, to always choose the lowest seat, because, while we may not know the intimate reality of the others, we are fully aware that in the great show of the universe we are totally irrelevant. Therefore, to place ourselves in the last position is to be on the safe side, lest the Lord, who knows us intimately, has to tell us: "'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place" (Lk 14:9).

In the same line of thought, the Master invites us to place ourselves with humility beside those chosen by God: the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and to be at the same level as them. Put simply, we must overcome our pride and shame to be among those God loves with special tenderness, and to share with them table and friendship.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. For after your glorious body was covered with blood, you were condemned to death on the cross, you endured the pain of carrying the cross on your sacred shoulders, and you were led with curses to the place where you were to suffer." (Saint Bridget)

- "Christ took the lowest place in the world—the Cross—and by this radical humility he redeemed us" (Benedict XVI)

- "Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore a refusal of charity; (...) the baptized person should train himself to live in humility." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2,540)