

August 31, 2025
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 14:1, 7-14

On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him closely.

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 places 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 everyone 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.”

Background:

In last week’s gospel, Jesus was asked how many would be saved. His response focused not on how many would be saved; but rather on the quality of one’s relationship with God. The gospel concluded with Jesus stating that “Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” (Luke 13:30) You may also remember from that gospel that Jesus had been reminded that he had eaten and drank with them, as a way of claiming a relationship with Jesus. The importance of table fellowship in this culture is an important element in the gospel for this Sunday.

Immediately after last Sunday’s text, Luke describes how some Pharisees come to Jesus and urge him to leave the area because Herod is seeking to kill him. Jesus mourns for the people of Jerusalem in a way that hints of his future rejection and death. Luke then returns to the Pharisees’ regard of Jesus, and describes an incident where a leading Pharisee has invited Jesus to a dinner at his house. That account is the gospel text for this Sunday.

The first line of the gospel sets the background for the unfolding of the rest of the text. The Sabbath dinner was an opportunity to invite non-family members to dinner and a time to engage in theological discussions. Jesus has been invited by a leading Pharisee, a group that believes in spirits and life after death. That Jesus is being carefully watched would not have been out of place. The second line of the gospel states that Jesus is also watching the guests, and how they are selecting their places.

Dinners like the one in this gospel were more formal than what most experience—perhaps more like a wedding banquet, where each guest is assigned a seat at a table. Those at the head table would be the more important guests. They would be served first and a better quality of food. Those seated further from the head table received a meal of lesser quality. The host would also provide the entertainment for the evening, that may range from some discussion, or a contest, to a presentation. Guests were expected to participate in what the host has selected as the entertainment. Accepting an invitation implied that one would return an invitation to the host. Therefore, in this culture one sought out many pieces of information before accepting an invitation.

In the gospel, Jesus’ own behavior breaks with custom and would have been considered improper. The first parable criticizes the behavior of the guests who are seeking out the places of honor and points to an unlikely

practice for trying to achieve recognition from the host. In so doing, one may find themselves publicly humiliated for presuming their status.

The second short parable is directed toward the host as the one who has invited those gathered. Again, Jesus suggests that the host not follow the traditionally accepted practice of inviting people with the expectation that they will return the invitation. Rather, Jesus exhorts them to invite those who have no hope of returning the gesture, and if invited would harm one's reputation. Jesus reverses how people attempting to use these systems are to gain the esteem of their host and others. Not said but implied is the suggestion that those who believe in eternal life ought to focus on one's status before God.

Reflection Questions:

1. How important is your reputation to you? What are some things you do to protect it, enhance it, and also place it at risk?
2. What were your family meals like? Do they have an unspoken structure?
3. What is the most formal dinner celebration to which you have been invited? What was that experience like for you? What are some of the details you remember about that occasion?
4. How many different times do you recall Jesus attending meals in the gospels? What does that suggest to you?
5. How many times in the gospel do recall Jesus feeding others? What does that suggest to you?
6. Here Jesus is going to dinner with a leading Pharisee. What thoughts or questions does this bring up within you?
7. If you had been present at the gathering described in today's gospel, what would have been some of the feelings going through you as this dinner unfolded?
8. How would you feel about inviting Jesus to your dinner table?
9. Can you take some time to talk to God about how important your reputation is with others, your family, and God? How does your approach to life strive to enhance those reputations? Or is there something else that arises within you that deserves some attention?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.loom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsccl-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from the readings for August 31, 2025, the Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.

Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.

What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not.

The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise.

Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor. The just rejoice and exult before God. Sing to the Lord, chant praise to his name. The father of orphans and the defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God gives a home to the forsaken; he leads forth prisoners to prosperity. A bountiful rain you showered down, O God, upon your inheritance; you restored the land when it languished; your flock settled in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided it for the needy.

Brothers and sisters: You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them. No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

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, 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, "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."

Excerpts from Sirach 3:17-20, 28-29; Psalm 68:4-11; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24; and Luke 14:1, 7-14

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for August 31st, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the gospel from Luke, Jesus advises the guests at a banquet, "Take the lowest place. The host may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

The other readings also have references to humbling oneself, and finding wisdom, and favor, and atonement. In the first reading from Sirach, we hear: "My child, conduct your affairs with humility. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. An attentive ear is the joy of the wise, and alms atone for sins." Psalm 68 exclaims, "God gives a home to the forsaken; in your goodness, O God, you provide for the needy." In the second reading, we hear from the letter to the Hebrews: "You have not approached gloomy darkness and storm. You have approached the city of the living God, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant."

The new covenant is unlike the old. This is not a law imposed on the people, to be accepted out of fear of retribution. This is a welcome extended, to come to the heavenly city of God, and to come to God himself. It is

offered, and it can be accepted in the loving spirit from which it is extended through Jesus. His example of how to extend an invitation is this: “When you invite your friends or relatives or your wealthy neighbors, they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. Indeed, you will be blessed because of their inability to repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!