

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - 2025 C

“Give your place to this man.” At first glance, Jesus tells this parable to teach about cultivating humility so we might avoid humiliation. But beyond that lesson in virtue, Jesus is really speaking of Himself.

The great Christian apologist CS Lewis still has the best definition of humility I have heard: that humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. So we can hear Jesus’ words – ***give your place to this man*** – as an opportunity to take the initiative, as He encourages His host to do with his next dinner party. The Lord warns us that it is better not to wait to be humiliated, when we would have to recognize with resentment that there will always be those who are smarter or more talented or more fortunate or more popular or more appreciated than we are. Instead, we can willingly place another at the center, stepping aside not because we think less of ourselves but because we are ***free***, secure enough to know our worth and status comes not from the opinions of those around us, but simply because we are each a beloved child of God. The virtue of true humility does not somehow lower us, but elevates us; it does not reflect being somehow LESS, but being something MORE. When we place another ahead of ourselves in genuine concern, we become most like God, Who is Love.

So “give your place to this man” can be heard as another version of the Great Commandment, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” But there is an even deeper revelation in Jesus’ words here. In the well-known text from Philippians, St. Paul says: ***“Though He was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, He emptied Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** Christ’s words at the banquet foreshadow His own ultimate humility. Leaving behind His heavenly glory to take on our human condition, He surrendered not just a place at a table but His very life on the Cross. ***He has given His place – life in the presence of the Father, united in the Holy Spirit – to***

each of us. And the Eucharist is where He invites all of us, in our own ways among the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. While we profess our desire to serve the Lord, it is only possible because He first SERVES US. He gives His place to us ... sometimes with him at the Cross, but always only so we may share in glory.

We still live in the midst of much darkness ... a world marked by war, violence, illness, loss, as well as our own personal trials and struggles known perhaps only to God. And we recognize that none of us alone can change the world—we cannot undo, prevent, or even explain the tragedies that mark our human condition. But we can humble ourselves, as the Lord does, Who came not to be served but to serve. This week, choose to give a place to another in your concern, your compassionate help, and your prayers, especially a child, for Jesus became small for us that we might become great. He gives His place to us now in service; and someday, we pray, in glory.