

GOSPEL

Luke 14:1, 7-14

On a sabbath day Jesus had gone for a meal to the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you would have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." In that way, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Then he said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations or rich neighbours, for fear they repay your courtesy by inviting you in return. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; that they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again.'

REFLECTION OF POPE LEO XIV

31 August 2025

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!
In every culture, sitting at table together, especially on days of rest and celebration, is a sign of peace and communion. In this Sunday's Gospel (Lk 14:1-14), Jesus is invited to a meal by one of the leaders of the Pharisees. Inviting others to one's table is a sign of openness of heart, while accepting such an invitation entails having the humility to be open to others and their world. These gestures that bring people together help foster a culture of encounter.

Encounter is not always easy. The Evangelist notes that the other guests "observed" Jesus closely; indeed, he was watched with some suspicion by the stricter interpreters of tradition. Yet the encounter takes place because Jesus makes

himself genuinely present; as a good guest, he acts with respect and sincerity, avoiding merely polite formalities that preclude authentic encounter. Consequently, as was his wont, he employs a parable to describe what he sees happening and invites those watching him to reflect on it. For he saw people rushing to sit in the places of honour, something that also happens today, not in families but on occasions when people consider it important to "be noticed", whereby a moment for being together ends up as a competition.

Sisters and brothers, when we sit together at the table of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, we too should be willing to let Jesus speak. He becomes our guest and he can tell us how he sees us. It is very important that we see ourselves through his eyes: to see how frequently we reduce life to a competition, how anxious we become to obtain some sort of recognition, and how pointlessly we compare ourselves to others. Stopping to reflect, letting ourselves be taken aback by a word that challenges our hearts' priorities, is to experience freedom, the freedom to which Jesus calls us.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of "humility" in describing perfect freedom (cf. Lk 14:11). Humility is really freedom from ourselves. It is born when the Kingdom of God and its righteousness become our real concern and we allow ourselves to lift up our eyes and look ahead: not down at our feet, but at what lies ahead! Those who exalt themselves generally think that nothing is more interesting than themselves; yet deep down, they are quite insecure. Whereas those who know that they are precious in God's eyes, who know they are God's children, have greater things to be worried about; they possess a sublime dignity all their own. Once we learn to take the last places, rather than striving for the first, that dignity will appear, and we will come to the fore simply and effortlessly.

Dear friends, today let us pray that the Church will always be a school of humility for everyone, a home where all are welcome, a place where rivalries are set aside and where Jesus still speaks to us and teaches us to imitate his own humility and freedom. Mary is truly the Mother of that home; it is to her that we now pray.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: Why do you think we are so often drawn into comparison, competition, and seeking recognition — even in situations meant for encounter and communion?



Heart: How do you feel when you imagine Jesus looking at your life and showing you where pride or the need to be noticed has taken over?



Hands: What would it look like in your daily life to “take the lowest place” — to practise humility and freedom from self in a way that welcomes others and honours God?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.