

Twenty-Second Sunday In Ordinary Time – Cycle C
August 27 & 28, 2016

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The readings today challenge each of us to take on the humility of God.

“You should behave humbly, and then you will find favor with God,” reads the book of Sirach.

I remember a very humble exchange at Francis House. The resident, Earl, was enjoying a conversation with Bob, a volunteer who had become friendly with Earl. In all humility Earl told Bob that he didn't know how to pray. Now, Bob, instead of running to get a chaplain simply told him, in all humility, that I just tell God what kind of day I had, what I am sorry for not doing well, and thanking God for the gifts of the day.

Humility comes from the words *humus* meaning soil. We are of the soil, with its richness and its craggy rocks. The humble person rises in the morning praising God for that is the person who realizes that all is gift. All that we have comes from God. Not like the little girl who was asked who made her. She responded: “God made me little but I grewed the rest.” St. Francis said: “We are who we are before God and nothing more.”

Paul's letter to the Hebrews promises that in the end we will be drawn to the spirits of just women and men made perfect and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. What does it mean to be made perfect? The closest translation is “to be made whole.” Jesus, this mediator of the New Covenant shows us the way to be made whole. He is the one who in the Gospel of Luke is seems to enjoy hanging out at the table with lots of different folks. In this particular passage he is teaching his hearers about humility. He challenges the guests to take a lower seat and not presume their importance, rather, to be asked to a higher seat. Then, he says to the host, you might do well to invite people who don't care where they sit because they are happy to just get in to get a meal such as the blind and the hungry.

You have to understand how radical this is. The dining experience in the first century was around a very low table with food in the middle. Wide low couches that fit about three grown men at a time would flank three or four sides of each table. The guests would all be reclining on their left side, heads closest to the table and bodies stretched away. The host would be in the middle with those most important to his right because the head of the most important would be nearest his chest. The seating marked your power, your rank in community, your influence, and how you would be seen by the other guests. So Jesus is undermining the social structure with his challenge. He is right ordering their priorities. He is saying that the Kingdom of God is not about importance, rank, and power.

Contemporary author, Diarmuid O'Murchu, going back to Jesus' spoken language, Aramaic; states in his book Inclusivity, that the best meaning and translation given to the words “Kingdom of God” is “**companionship of empowerment**.” No wonder every time Jesus is at table there is a problem. He does not follow all the ritual laws that the Pharisees are watching for because those are not his priorities. He eats with tax collectors like Matthew and Matthew's sinning buddies. He allows a woman with a questionable reputation to wash his feet with her tears and anoint them with oil. He invites a tree climbing tax collector to be the host at a diner for Jesus. This is Jesus all out radical upheaval of the accepted order of the day and his challenge to each of us of humble hospitality. God's love is one of radical inclusivity.

Dorothy Day, like Jesus, fought to have every person welcomed in the Catholic Worker homes, alcoholic and prostitute, poor and downtrodden, those from the streets and alleys. Pope Francis is a model for following Jesus' priority of inclusivity, the communion of all.

We might ask ourselves with Jesus' challenge in mind: Who would not feel welcome in our church? In your home? At your table? Or even in your daily greeting to others?

Who takes priority in your mind? Is there anyone you would put outside the circle of acceptance? Let us pray for the courage to follow Jesus with humble inclusivity and hospitality.

Amen.