

XXII ORDINARY TIME – September 1st, 2013

EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED, AND HE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Lk 14.1.7-14

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

It is not advisable to invite Jesus to dine, at least for Pharisees. Each time they tried, Jesus ruined it. This chapt 14 began with an invitation made by one of the leaders of the Pharisees to Jesus and there was the accident of the man with dropsy, when Jesus asked whether it was lawful or not to heal on a Sabbath, and they failed to reply.

And he continues attacking their ambition, *“Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor”*. It is not the first time that Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for having chosen the places of honor. These pious and devout individuals are devoured by ambition, the desire to excel and, quoting a well known example that is also present in the Book of Proverbs in chap 25, we read, *“Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, ‘Come up here’, than to be put lower in the presence of a noble”*.

So Jesus, by quoting this well known example, almost with the same words, advises: *“«When you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place»”*, but not out of humility or modestly, but for love, to allow others to take advantage. The first places at table were those where one was served before and better. Therefore choosing last place is not an unhealthy sense of humility or whatever else, but love, in order to favor others.

“«So that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.»” And here comes Jesus’ sentence, *“«For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted»”*.

But again, this is not a sense of modesty, but always a love expression. Always choose the welfare of others, then; if you choose others’ sake, the Lord, who knows it, will take care of yourself. So Jesus reverses the system of values of society, where everything was done for interest and exhorts to choose his path, the one of giving.

And then, *“He said also to the man who had invited him, «When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors»”*. Here are four kinds of relationships: friendship, kinship, we might say interest, regarding business, relationships who support a society that is self-protecting, to the detriment of others.

So, do not invite others for your interest, for your welfare, *“«Lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind»”*. Here Jesus lists all the excluded from society, who were not allowed in the temple and were excluded from the priesthood. *“«And you will be blessed»”*.

We find in Gospels many Beatitudes, that is a call to happiness. Happiness consists in giving, not for interest, but for love.

You will be blessed, why? *“«Because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at ...»”*, pay attention, this is not a message for believers, Jesus is addressing to Pharisees in the way they can understand, *“«... the resurrection of the just»”*, because Pharisees believed that the righteous would be resurrect, and others would not.

What does Jesus say, then? Don’t act for interest, but only for generosity, take care of others’ sake and let God take care of you and he will do so in abundance.