

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time “C” Cycle August 27-28, 2016

Emily Post is a name from the past which may not mean anything to the younger people present. She was an authority and wrote books on etiquette which is the proper way to be polite and considerate to others, how to carry oneself in public, and how to dine respectably.

Today’s Gospel from Saint Luke tells us that Jesus was invited as a guest at the home of one of the prominent Pharisees. Others were invited as well who were vying for the best seats at table. Jesus took the occasion to deliver a parable.

The lesson of the parable was to teach the virtue of humility. The dinner guests should not presume that they deserved places of honor over others. Instead they should take the lower places. Jesus goes on to say: “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Our Lord is not really concerned about dining etiquette as Emily Post would be. He is promoting respect for others and also for not presuming that we are better or more important than others, even if we have more education, wealth, or positions of authority.

This is why Jesus urges his host to invite not only those who are expected to reciprocate but also those who cannot reciprocate such as the poor, the lame, and the blind. This is humility, recognizing that we are all God’s creatures, deserving respect. The sin opposed to humility is pride, one of the capital sins, which is thinking and acting as we are superior to others and showing disdain for those we deem below us.

There is, of course, a good and healthy pride, in which we acknowledge and are grateful for the gifts, talents, and advantages we have and use them for our benefit and the good of others, realizing that these gifts and talents ultimately come from God.

In Saint Luke's Gospel especially, we find Jesus comparing the Kingdom of God to a banquet, to which all are invited from all races, nations, and stations in life. This is a precious invitation we do not earn or merit, but a gracious gift from the Lord.

Humility is one of the fundamental virtues drawing us closer to God. This is the virtue many saints have modeled for us. We have the example of Katherine Drexel, whose wealthy family was a part of the high society of Philadelphia. They opened their home to the poor and disadvantaged several days a week, providing them with food and clothing. Katherine herself spent her life and heiress fortune in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of Native and African Americans.

We may not have the resources of the Drexel's but there are ways in which, with the help of God's grace, we can cultivate the virtue of humility beginning in very simple ways by being courteous, polite, considerate and generous. We can hold door for others, say thank you to store clerks, give preference to others in traffic, etc.

As we grow in humility, we will be happier and make others happy. We have a better teacher than Emily Post, in Jesus, our humble Savior. Praise him!