

Dining in Heaven

The children were starving in Calcutta and Mother Teresa had to go begging to ensure that the orphans would be fed. She prayed and considered that her next option would be to go to a baker in town who hated her. When Mother Teresa knocked at the door and reached out her hands, "Please give us something to eat." Instead of charity, she was met with derision and anger and, the baker was so furious at her that he actually spat in her hand. Mother Teresa gently wiped the spit from her hand with her sari and replied: "Thank you for what you have given for me. Will you give something for my children?" This baker was so shocked by her humility that he sincerely apologized and began regularly assisting the orphans.

We are invited today in the Gospel to embrace the virtue of humility.

Sit at the lowest seat rather than the highest seat so that you will be honored rather than dishonored. This may be a good practical suggestion, but Is Jesus just giving good dining advice in the Gospel today? What is the spiritual nugget that Jesus is trying to convey?

Jesus is trying to communicate to us the deeper reality of things, the deeper reality of heaven. It is as if our vision has been skewed by original sin and we are seeing life without 3D glasses, but the thing is we do not know that we need 3D glasses. We think it is normal to just see blurry images that don't make sense. In our world, greatness is measured by power, domination, personal prestige. What Jesus is trying to do is that he is trying to help us put on the 3D glasses of humility to overcome the blindness caused by pride to help us see the true reality of things.

So what is he trying to get us to see? He wants us to see that humility is the law of heaven.

When Jesus says, "for all who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted", Jesus knows this from personal experience. St. Paul wrote of Jesus:

⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

The incarnation and birth of Jesus was the most profound act of humility. When Jesus, the Word of God, the King of Kings, was about to be born, he could have chosen to be born anywhere like a palace, or a nice hotel or a warm house. Instead he chose to be born in the stable or cave with the animals. If an angel was able to warn Joseph to escape from Herod's hand, surely an angel could have told an innkeeper to save a spot for the Word made Flesh.

Jesus chose poverty, Jesus chose humility to show us on earth what heaven would be like. Did you know that Jesus not only serves us in this life (the son of man came not to be served but to serve), but even in heaven as well: It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them (Lk 12:37)

For some people it would be crazy to think that God would wait on tables for us in heaven! Yet this is the truth. Humble service is not foreign to Jesus because service and humility is at the heart of what it means to love and God is Love.

Therefore, Jesus is not just giving us practical advice for dining in banquets on earth, he is modeling and revealing to us what it will be like to dine in the banquet of heaven; he is pulling back the curtain on the mystery that awaits us in heaven where God will serve us in heaven and we will serve him and one another in joy and love.