

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY [C]

*Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a; Luke 14:1, 7-14*

Finally a great mystery has been answered!

Jesus says, “go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table” (Luke 14:10).

Now, I know why the last seats in every church including ours are filled first!

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One of the great themes taught to us by the spiritual masters, the saints, is the theme known as *detachment*.

Detachment is the process of letting go of those things that simply are not of God.

When the soul gets hooked onto something other than God, the soul gets sick. Just as mussels attach to boats and clog water intakes (some of you boaters have had damages to your vessels), so too do those things that are not of God try to find a place to stick to us and slow us down or altogether stop us in our tracks.

The Gospel today talks about one of the most alluring and dangerous attachments that can sicken the human soul: ambition. Jesus sounds a warning about the dangers involving power, honor, glory, the esteem of others and having a great name.

In no uncertain terms, Jesus serves notice about the perilous nature of being noticed, being celebrated, being recognized and receiving the adulations of others.

Hollywood types incessantly live by the credo that “all press is good press.” In this way, they hold there is no such thing as bad press. As long as they are in the news, people are talking about them.

Now to be fair, honor, ambition and honor are extremely attractive. There is a terrific rush we get when we are noticed and celebrated. Think back to some of these moments in your own life:

- The first time you are noticed for a good grade and a teacher announces it in the presence of your classmates.
- You barely hit a ball off a tee and your parents are proclaiming you to be the next major league hall of fame lock.

- The first time you see your name printed in the press (positively, that is).
- The first time you are acknowledged for an terrific accomplishment – whatever the setting - music, theater, athletics, etc...

We feel the rush, we feel the excitement.

However, honor is a *sign* of an achievement. The achievement itself is the significant thing and the later affirmation is merely a sign of it.

The accomplishment happened from your hard work and dedication; that is, you saw it through to its completion. It is not notable because someone says so – it is notable because you accomplished it.

Let me put it another way: honor is cotton candy. If you are trying to feed yourself on cotton candy, you cannot satisfy your appetite.

If you try to feed your soul on honor, you never will be satisfied, you will crave more and more and eventually you will become sick.

### **Today's Gospel:**

Ambition depends upon our being seen by others. It only becomes a problem when there are others who watch us. What does Jesus notice? He notices how people are choosing places of honor at table.

Think for a moment: your company, your university, your family, your team – whatever arena of ambition in which you live – how often we spend our energy to find the most honored position, picking our way through to be noticed. How much spiritual energy we spend looking at one another, who is rising, who is falling!

The ambitious person is a *slave* to the opinions and attitudes of those around him/her – jockeying for position, trying to capture the attention of the crowd.

Very often, the ambitious person seems to be the most confident, the most self-contained, the most on top of their game. Just the opposite is true!

The ambitious person is so dependent on the thoughts and esteem of others that he/she is a slave to their opinions.

Do we do things for others in an effort to buy the honor of someone?

Before you say no...have you found yourself emotionally charged when you gave a gift and you do not receive a thank you or acknowledgement? That may a sign that our motivations are not entirely poor. Can you give without return?

Turn to Jesus. Turn to the one who took the lowest place [God became man] and gave Himself away out of love for us and for our salvation.