



Sunday 28th August 2022

My dear brothers and sisters, how are your families? I hope today's message brings you peace, wisdom and knowledge of God's eternal giving love. In today's gospel, I want to invite you to reflect a bit on the word "symposium." The word symposium means a good time. It's ancestry is Greek, a combination of the prefix syn-, meaning "together" and the word meaning "drink". Originally, a symposium was a gathering of people who discussed intellectual matters while drinking wine. More than their professors at dull conferences, students who attempt to solve the world's problems while seated around a pizza and a pitcher of beer are carrying on a venerable tradition, the roots of the University. So, our topic today is:

The symposium of God's eternal giving Love continues

In today's gospel, Jesus is at a symposium. Scholars say that Luke took various sayings and deeds of Jesus that he thought belonged together and presented them as happening during a meal. Perhaps it was Luke's Greek background that gave him the idea of presenting Jesus at a symposium.

It is a Friday night or Saturday daytime. People are sprawled around the floor, leaning on cushions. (Chairs were not common, and people are around a low table) There is wine, food and lots of talk. As Luke says, all eyes were on Jesus. What he said or did would form the basis of the symposium. Today, we hear two topics. In the first, Jesus comments upon those jockeying for good places at the table. At first, he merely gives the kind of advice that any teacher might give. "When you are invited, go and sit at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you." This is not profound advise. In fact, it seems calculating. I have seen people follow it literally, and their reasons have been nothing to do with humility But, Jesus adds something that puts his advise in a new light. He is not teaching manners or social advancement, but the kingdom of God. The host parallels God, who invites all people to a banquet.

My dear brothers and sisters, my place at that banquet is not one I have earned. It is for God to decide where I belong. It is in humility that I know that all I have comes from God. "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

As the eating and drinking continue, so does the symposium. Sometime later in the meal (and just because Luke puts one saying of Jesus after another does not mean we cannot imagine more conversation and joking in between), Jesus turns to his host and makes an observation about invitations. "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind."

In a time and place without social welfare schemes, the disabled were almost invariably poor. They were frequently outcasts because some people thought their disabilities were a divine punishment. So, Jesus is not talking so much about physical disabilities as he is about the poor and the outcast. He tells the host to invite them.

On one level, Jesus is recommending charity to those most in need. But, he is also issuing an invitation to the host and to us. He is inviting us to be like God who invites all people to the banquet of eternal life giving love. In so doing, we show God's love to our neighbour. Through us, our neighbours will know God. we also show ourselves ready to understand and receive God's gift. "You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

In Luke's Gospel, the symposium continues. It should continue in our lives. We tend to think that reflection upon the word of God, upon the work of God, is something solemn, serious, and private But sometimes, we should be ready to hear the word in the hustle and bustle of our lives, in the symposium of eating, drinking and gabbing that is our daily life.

As I wish you God's blessings and protection in your families, may we continue that symposium of God's eternal giving love in our Families. God bless you all.

Yours Affectionately, Father Nicholas Nwanzi