

Homily – 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings: Sirach 3:17–18, 20, 28–29; Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24; Luke 14:1, 7–14

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today's readings invite us to reflect on something that is simple to understand but often difficult to practise: humility.

In the Gospel, Jesus notices how people are choosing the places of honour at the table. He tells them, *"Do not put yourself in the place of honour."* At first, this may sound like a lesson in good manners. But Jesus is speaking about something much deeper the attitude of our hearts.

Humility does not mean thinking that we are worthless. Rather, it means knowing who we are before God and recognising that everything we have is ultimately a gift.

This is particularly relevant to us as a parish community. We can sometimes measure our importance by the position we hold, the responsibilities we carry, the recognition we receive, or even by how much people appreciate what we do. But Jesus reminds us today that the Christian life is not about being noticed; it is about being available to God and to one another.

I see so much quiet goodness in our parish. People who come early to prepare the church, those who clean, serve at the altar, read, sing, organise our parish activities, visit the sick, collect food for those in need, support our children and families, and give generously without expecting recognition. Much of this work is never seen from the altar and perhaps that is precisely what makes it beautiful.

Jesus says, *"When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind."* In other words, do good not because you will receive something in return, but because love itself is the reward.

That is a powerful challenge for us. Who are the people whom we perhaps overlook? Who in our neighbourhood is lonely? Who has stopped coming to church because they feel forgotten? Who needs a phone call, a visit, a word of encouragement or simply someone willing to listen?

Our churches are not simply buildings where we come to fulfil our Sunday obligation. They are meant to be communities where people experience the welcome of Christ.

And perhaps there is another message for us today. We are living at a time when both our parish communities are facing changes and challenges. We may worry about numbers, buildings, finances, volunteers or the future. But Jesus reminds us that the strength of a parish is not ultimately measured by numbers or resources. It is measured by the quality of its love.

Let us therefore ask ourselves this Sunday: *Am I seeking recognition, or am I seeking to serve? Am I concerned about my place, or am I helping someone else find their place?*

The greatest place at the table is not necessarily the place of honour. The greatest place is where Christ wants us to be close to those who need our love.

May the Lord give us humble hearts, generous spirits and the grace to serve quietly and faithfully. And may our parish communities at St Paul's and St John's become ever more clearly places where everyone especially those who feel forgotten or excluded can discover that there is always a place for them at the table of Christ.

Amen.