

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

August 29, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: SIRACH 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not.

PSALM 68

God, in your goodness you have made a home for the poor.

2ND READING: HEBREWS 12:18-19, 22-24

No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...

GOSPEL: LUKE 14:1, 7-14

Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

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Years ago, I saw a skit by Lily Tomlin. She was dressed in a sweatsuit and jumping from one leg to the other in some sort of aerobic exercise. Slightly out of breath she looked at the camera and said, "All my life I prayed I would be somebody...now I see, I should have been more specific."

Today's Gospel gives us a glimpse of Jesus. Obviously he was witty and was able to preach good common sense. The important part was the ending:

Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.

At the start of the very next chapter of Luke's Gospel, The Pharisees criticize Jesus saying, "he entertained sinners." Maybe Jesus was host for more dinner parties than just the Last Supper. Either Jesus actually invited the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to his own dinner parties or Jesus was mocking his host as a social climber. Knowing Jesus as we do, what would you think?

Jesus is always challenging us to repent—change our ways—and embrace the values that are really meaningful to God. At the moment we finally listen, we might find ourselves thinking, "O nuts, do I *have* to?" Yet, how often have we heard a person say, "Once I made up my mind, I found peace."

Christopher was a good lawyer. He had an opportunity to join a law firm in a different part of the state. Although his oldest child was about to enter senior

year of high school, his middle child was about to enter eighth grade and his youngest was entering third grade and his wife, Anne, had a close circle of friends and family where they lived, Christopher decided this was the perfect time to move. You see, Anne went to an Al-anon meeting this week. Christopher believed a new location and a new law firm would help him give up drinking. That's how he convinced his family to go. He quit drinking cold turkey and it wasn't easy. Anne and the kids were grateful. But then the senior partner stole the escrow funds and put the firm into bankruptcy. It was quick; Christopher never saw it coming and regrouped with a double scotch straight up. The physical compulsion and mental obsession returned with a fury. The next four months were unadulterated hell for his family. One Wednesday, his wife reminded him he had made an appointment at noon. He didn't remember. But the doorbell rang and a man from Alcoholics Anonymous said, "Hi, I'm Harvey from AA, your husband called." Christopher escaped to the kitchen. Anne said, "What do you have to lose? Talk with the man." Christopher said, "I guess my wife is right and I can see what you're talking about; I will cut back on the sauce." But it wasn't until Anne's lawyer presented him with divorce papers that he finally decided he needed to change. He entered AA and a new way of living. He doesn't know yet whether Anne will return but his kids are encouraging him.

Jesus comes to us in the "Harveys" of our lives, often the people we'd most like to avoid. In the destructiveness of the prevailing situation, Jesus calls us from despair to hope, from slavery to freedom, from devastating ordinariness to a new way of life. His parables are gifts, shattering our complacency, opening undreamed possibilities, promising that we shall have life and have it in abundance. We are the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind who can never pay Jesus back. We gather at this table and he is our host for the greatest of all banquets, the banquet of new life, the banquet of the good news!