

Homily for September 1, 2019
Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
By Steve Livingston

Today's reading from the Gospel of Luke is just another reason why I love both books by this evangelist. St. Paul calls the "Beloved Physician". He ... of course wrote ... not just for the Jewish community ... but for **all** of us. And ... in St. Luke's account of the life of our Lord ... he stresses the **importance** of a topic that is near and dear to **my** heart ... that of the **meal!** ... St. Luke's portrayal shows us a Jesus ... who attached great significance and importance to food ... and to the simple act ... of gathering to eat.

He shared meals with both the much-hated ... **tax collectors** and ... dined with the socially elite **Pharisees**. He scandalized the Jewish leaders by His apparent laxity ... about fasting and by allowing His disciples to pick the heads of grain as they walked through the fields ... technically in violation of the **Sabbath**. And when He taught us to pray ... his **first** petition was for "our daily bread" and then He told us not to worry ... that our Heavenly Father would provide it. He was concerned for feeding the multitudes ... that came out to hear Him ... and at the Last Supper, of course, He gave us that dearest food ... Himself in the Eucharist. And after His resurrection ... He revealed Himself to the disciples he had met on the road to Emmaus ... "in the breaking of the bread" and later ... to the disciples in Jerusalem by sharing a meal ... of baked fish.

And when He taught ... frequently it was **at** a meal and **very** often the meal itself ... would be the setting for the lesson ... from the banquet where the rich man ignored Lazarus ... to the feast a loving father ... prepared for his prodigal son. We have just such a lesson today. At today's Gospel meal Jesus serves up one of his **favorite** dishes ... a lesson in **humility** ... and the pitfalls of false pride.

We know **nothing** about the Pharisee who invited Jesus to this banquet ... except that he was one of the **leaders** of that group. We **do** know that many there were watching Jesus ... hoping to catch Him ... in violation ... of some custom or law ... that this might be used **against** Him later. But as **they** were watching **Him** ... **He** was watching **them** ... and making note of their **posturing** ... and **jockeying** ... for position ... each trying to ensure that **his** lofty status was acknowledged, respected and ... possibly even increased. I imagine Our

Lord watched all this with some amusement ... and then finally ... used the occasion to teach ... **"everyone who exalts himself will be humbled ..."**

Everyone ... at one time or another ... has seen one of those old comedies ... where a snob or maybe a bully ... gets his ... or her "**comeuppance**" ... maybe slips on the banana peel or otherwise loses his dignity and we usually laugh or cheer ... at least inwardly. And don't we get a sort of perverse delight when we see that arrogant so-and-so ... that **passed** us a few miles back ... going 20 miles over the speed limit ... off on the side of the road ... in front of a car with a ... flashing red light? Don't we really **enjoy** it? I must admit *I* do ... that is ... **unless** ... the one who is being humbled ... is **me!** That is **no** laughing matter! And occasionally ... that too ... happens!

The problem is ... when *I* am the one who is allowing false pride to lead **me** into self-exultation ... it is nowhere near as easy for **me** to see ... as it is when **another** is doing it. And if I do see it ... on **me** it never looks quite as bad and seems **much** easier for me to forgive. ... And if my false pride leads me into sin ... well ... God will **surely** understand.

And **there** is the trap! It has **always** been so! From the sin of pride which led to that first rebellion against God by the forces of evil ... to the sin of pride that led our first parents to disobedience ... right down to this very day ... **every** sin we commit ... has been preceded by the sin ... of false pride. For by its very definition ... **sin** ... is choosing to do **our** will ... over God's will. And **that** ... is the sin of false pride!

Now ... if I have achieved any **success** in life ... by **whatever** ... criteria you define success ... If I have achieved success in life ... and believe it was **all** because of **my own efforts** ... that **God and His goodness** had **nothing** to do with it ... I commit a very serious sin of false pride. And this **must** inevitably lead to other sins ... ignoring the needs of others ... the poor ... the church ... to name a few.

And consider for a moment those sins against the fifth commandment ... the abortions ... the executions ... the wars ... those killed in gang violence ... those killed for greed ... lives lost ... because men or women ... in their arrogance and false pride ... believe they are qualified to make the decision ... and have the right ... to **deprive** someone ... of the gift of life ... given them ... by God. ...

Sadly ... in the culture of our world today ... selfishness ... and false pride are applauded as rights and Faith and a sense of sin ... are portrayed as roadblocks ... *things that hold us back from reaching our potential.* And so ... maybe we won't be humbled ... in this world. But ... that is really too bad ... because then ... our humbling ... will surely be in the next.