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Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Daniel M. Jordan

Member of The Well and Micah 6:8 communities

For all who exalts themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Lk 14:11).

I admit that the title of Jesus as the “Great Table Turner” doesn’t have the same ring as Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” or the “Prince of Peace.” But perhaps it should.

There are so many examples in Scripture of Jesus turning the tables (literally, in the Temple) and figuratively via the tone and meaning of his parables. It is this latter style of table turning that Jesus so eloquently expresses in this Sunday’s readings.

Jesus, while attending a Pharisee’s house party with self-seeking guests, turns the tables at this tony event by telling a wedding banquet parable. Jesus’ root message in the parable is that the party guests should *re-frame* their lives to be of service and should *refrain* from grandiosity, self-promotion, and the quest for power. For the party-throwing Pharisee, Jesus’ words are much harsher: use your power to empower the most marginalized in society, regardless of personal cost.

“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” (Lk 14:13-14).

For Jesus, the one who serves is the greatest not because of achievement or status but because of love in action to those in need. This is the call to build God’s Kingdom.

We in the Marianist Family strive for equality and to be people of service. In fact, we like to use the image of a round table where there is no position of honor or authority. All are invited to join the table, and those in positions of authority (after all we do need people to lead and structure) do so out of function and ministry and not out of a desire for prestige and control.

Lest we be proud of ourselves for the imagery of a round, headless table, Jesus’ banquet parable calls us personally and corporately as Marianists to see how we are doing. Are we serving the poor and treating the physical and emotion wounds of the cripple, lame, and blind before us? Or, does Jesus need to turn over our Marianist table?

More than anything, Jesus’ words call us to *re-frame* our motives and ensure that God is at the heart of our attitudes, actions, and dispositions.

For those in the United States, in these politically divisive times, the tone of humility and service to society, including on issues related to immigration, must be upheld and amplified by our actions and lives. Basic human rights and dignity must always be upheld. This includes fighting any proposal to overturn the Flores Settlement, which provides a basic level of standards to immigrant families in detention with children and to unaccompanied minors.

After all, these are the families and children that Jesus would first invite to the wedding banquet.



A Final Thought

What is primacy for us? Is it turning away men, women, and children at our borders, breaking up families, and building walls? Or is it service and not superiority? Jesus tells us we cannot have both.