

**Reflection on the Gospel-22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time C
(Luke 14:1, 7-14)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

One of the most disturbing features of life in our times is the forced displacement of peoples. Some displaced people receive the hospitality they seek. Others find themselves locked out and abandoned. These people, like Jesus, are “carefully watched” lest they disturb the lifestyle and comfort of those who have more than their share of the planet’s resources. A 2016 Oxfam report indicates that the combined wealth of the world’s 62 richest people equals that of 3.5 million others, the poorer half the world’s population. The gospel challenge is to find a way to redress the obscene imbalance represented by those figures because the global community has the resources to provide a home for everyone and the means for all to live in the dignity of the children of God.

Today’s gospel has Jesus under scrutiny as he dines in the home of a leading Pharisee. In Luke’s gospel, the Pharisees are generally depicted as hostile to Jesus. This portrait reflects the situation of the time the gospels are being written when Pharisaic Judaism and Christian Judaism had parted ways. At the time of Jesus’ ministry, the Pharisees were a minority group of well-respected experts in the Law. Despite the hostility from his host, Jesus is not deterred from expressing his opinion and as usual he does so in the form of a story that comes from the experience of his hearers. He first addresses the guests and then the host. The guests are clearly not from the lower echelons of society. They are people who receive invitations to wedding banquets where places of honour are reserved for the most distinguished guests. Jesus appeals to their fairly normal fear of being shamed before others. He also reminds them of the principle of reversal that operates in God’s kin-dom where those who seek the first places find themselves last and the last are first.

Jesus’ advice for his host is more removed from first century Palestinian experience than is his advice for the guests: do not invite friends, family and wealthy neighbours; invite the destitute and those with disabilities. In other words, invite those considered unclean by observant Jews rather than those who have the capacity to return your hospitality. This was a confronting suggestion in that culture. It embodied the inclusive values of the kin-dom vision that Jesus had preached from the outset. It is confronting for us in our times. It is easy to welcome like-minded people into our land and our homes. It is not so easy to be open to those who see the world differently from us. We are invited to look on them with love rather than hostility and to secure a place for them in our hearts and in our common home.