

## 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time      Year B

Once there was a wealthy merchant who had his newly married son and his wife living in his household. The son had a kind heart, and devoted himself to charitable works, helping every poor person who asked for his assistance.

In time the wife gave birth to a son. In honour of the occasion, the happy grandfather arranged a great feast. Shortly before the festivities were about to begin, the son asked: “Tell me, father, what arrangements have you made for the seating of the guests? If you do the conventional thing and seat the rich at the head table and the poor near the door, it will distress me. You know very well how I love the poor. As this is my celebration, let me honour those who get no honour. Promise me, then, to seat the poor at the head table and the rich at the door.”

His father listened attentively and replied, “My son, it is difficult to change the world. Look at it this way. Why do poor people come to a feast? Because they are hungry and would like to eat a good meal. And why do rich people come to a feast? To get honour. They don’t come to eat because they have enough at home.

Now just imagine what would happen if you seated the poor at the head table. They would sit there, very self-consciously, feeling everybody’s eyes on them, and so would be ashamed to eat their fill. And what they’d eat they wouldn’t enjoy. Don’t you think it would be better for their sake that they sat unnoticed at the door, where they could eat to their heart’s content without being ashamed?

Then again, suppose I were to do what you’re asking and seat the rich at the door. Don’t you think they’d feel insulted. They don’t come for the sake of the food, but for the honour. And if you don’t give them that, what will they get?”

The Eucharist is the banquet Jesus provides for his followers. All of us come to this banquet hungry; all of us need the bread only Jesus can give – the bread of eternal life. And all of us come here poor before God. Here all of us are nourished – at the table of his word and at the table of the eucharist. And here all of us are honoured, because here, every place is a place of honour.