



Give your place to this man...

FRIENDS, how embarrassed, how aggrieved would you feel if you were invited to a very big dinner with all sorts of dignitaries and celebrities, and after having been seated being asked to move so someone else can have your seat? I know I might feel more than a little put-off by it.

What if the person given your seat were someone who may not even be as high in social stature as you? It's our fallen human nature that takes us to such places as feeling a sense of relief that someone else has suffered misfortune rather than us. Losing a seat close to the "action" is a small misfortune, and yet we could let it ruin our entire evening, and perhaps even carry the feeling of having been disrespected around like some big rock that we can't set down.

*"I had the blues because I had no shoes
until upon the street
I met a man who had no feet."*

Again, it's because of our fallen human nature that our views are skewed. We tend to want to live in a world that revolves around us—and I know I'm as guilty as anyone sometimes, when things don't play out the way I would like them to. If we would only but pray that God would allow us the humility to see others as he sees them. Remember, God humbled himself in becoming one of us to free us from the death that is our just punishment for the sin we commit.

Last week I wrote about how blessed we are to have people from other cultures living with and among us; Fr. Fulgens from Africa, and the Sisters of Divine Love from Africa as well, and all the people from Mexico and Central and South America, people from various areas of Asia, and many places from all around the world are living among us! That is truly universal, which is the essence of the meaning of the word catholic.

This week, we are still reeling from the news that Del Monte has plans to shut down their operation here in Mendota. They've been a part of our community since the late 1940s, and the presence of such a great and long-time employer is sure to be felt for a very long time. What do we do about it though? Sure, the people that have worked there long enough will end up with a decent severance package. I know, I've been through it too, when the RR Donnelley plant closed down.

I'll ask again, what do we do about it? How can we help? There are certainly workers there who have not been on the job long enough to earn a decent severance, and I dare say, they need our help more than most. If we are who we say we are—Catholic Christians living in a Christian community—

then shouldn't we step up and prove it? God has told us over and over that he does not desire the burnt holocausts in offering from us, rather, what he desires is that we care for and love each other.

We can contribute extra to the local food pantry; we can do whatever is necessary to become *our brother's keeper*. Especially if we know someone who will be impacted by this shut down, we ought to talk to them and ask them what we might do to help. Even if it's nothing more than listen to them in the sorrow, anger, or frustration. It is up to us to be the eyes and ears, hands and feet of Christ as we work to advance the cause of love in the world.

Conduct your affairs with humility...

The words that God speaks to us through Sirach are such lovely music! If only we will conduct our affairs with humility, then we will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.

This is precisely what Jesus was talking about when he spoke of the proper conduct as an invited guest. If we have been invited, then we are surely welcome. However that invitation does not necessarily mean we should arrive as guests of honor. No, we should be honored to be invited and carry that honor no further. Let the host determine whether we are to be seated near the head table or near the door. It shouldn't matter. What should matter is that we have been invited!



Notice that Jesus says do not recline at table. Their tables were built close to the ground and they didn't have chairs like we do. They *reclined* on cushions on the floor. It would have been even more distressing to have to move to another spot. If we are prepared to give our place to someone else, then our whole outlook on the day's festivities will be changed for the better!

If we are to avoid the embarrassment of being asked to move, we should enter humbly and be prepared to move to an even lower vantage point. This way, the host may well see us and recommend a place closer to the head table so our joy may be all the more full.