

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

TWENTY-SECOND ORDINARY SUNDAY (C) 29th AUGUST 2010

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Jesus is talking about humility. He explains what he means in the first parable. Someone at a wedding reception, sits in the wrong place.

Everyone has their proper place. The hosts decide where everyone is to sit and they have reasons for deciding.

It's always embarrassing to sit in the wrong place and have to move down. It literally puts us in our place. It humbles us.

To be humble means to recognise our proper place and keep to it.

To be humble does not mean to think the worst of ourselves, to think that we are worthless.

It means to recognise our true worth.

Jesus' point is that our worth is given to us by God. God decides our worth just as the hosts at a meal decide where their guests should sit. That's why Jesus says we must not exalt ourselves.

To exalt ourselves means that we decide our own worth, decide where we should sit.

The hosts at a wedding reception choose the people they value most to sit closest to them.

God gives us our value and he gives very high value indeed to those who love him and have faith in him, those who do not think about their own image and status.

It's sad to see so many people worried about their status and their image – girls who are desperate to be as slim as their celebrity idols, middle-aged men who disguise their greying hair with artificial colours, parents who get into debt to make sure that their children have the right clothes and accessories.

In our culture the media decides what makes a celebrity, who is important in society, who will take the seats of honour.

As Christians we do not have to follow the media.

God gives us our value; God decides who the celebrities are; God decides who will have the seats of honour in his kingdom.

Our second reading reminds us that this world is only temporary anyway.

Our permanent home is in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The ones whom God chooses to sit with him are the ones who need him most, the ones who trust God to decide their value and their worth.

That's the good news in today's gospel.

Don't worry about your status in society.

God knows and the more you leave it to God the more he will value you and honour you.

This is good news but it has one awkward consequence.

It means that God may value people that we would not choose to associate with, the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind – all excluded from respectable company in Jesus' day.

Jesus may also include people that some Catholics may feel awkward with – homosexuals, cohabiting couples, women who have had abortions.

Jesus invites everyone who needs him.

Let's pray that as we accept our place at God's table we may be willing to accept the he has the right to chose all his guests and give them their place.

Let's simply thank him for including us among them.

Rev Geoff Carey