

# Role Reversal

## This Week's Readings at Mass

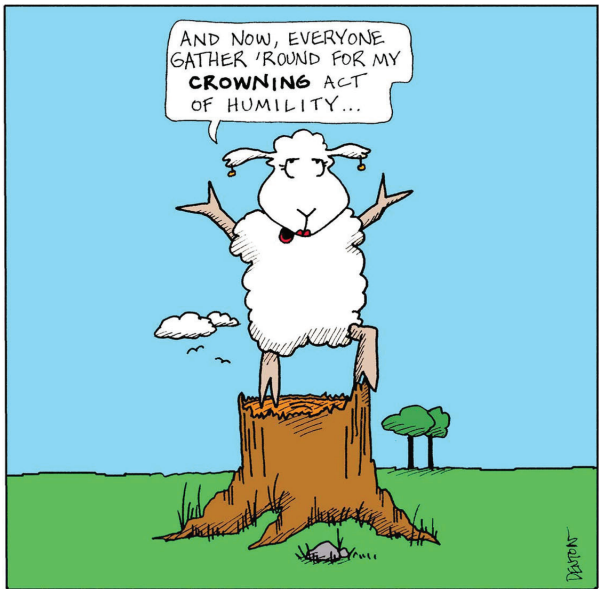
- ▶ Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29 - Humility
- ▶ Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a - God the judge; Jesus the mediator
- ▶ Luke 14:1, 7-14 - A lesson in humility



Jesus is an astute people-watcher. Throughout the Gospels, he notices and comments on the subtle behavior and language of those around him, reading into the hearts of the people he encounters. In the Gospel today, Jesus presumably notices that he is being observed carefully by his host and the friends of the leading Pharisee who had invited him to dinner. Knowing that they were also studying *him* carefully, he boldly launches into a teaching about pride and humility when he notices the social posturing that goes on as the guests jockey for the best seats at the table.

As usual, Jesus is an “equal opportunity offender;” this time calling out his host and his companions for a social practice that was widely accepted in their day—aiming for the highest rung possible on the social ladder. While the host might have been seeking gratitude and honor for inviting Jesus and hosting such a famous guest, Jesus doesn’t waver from his teaching and preaching about God’s particular concern for the poor, the outcast, and the forgotten in communities. His bluntness calls out both the individuals playing their social cards and the societal practice itself that isolates so many members of society.

After probably offending his host and the other guests by calling on them to quit jockeying for position, he goes even farther. Not only should they humble themselves in each others’ company, but they should also go out of their way to “exalt” those who will never be



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“Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.”

**Sheepish Question:**  
Who am I trying to impress?

able to repay them: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. To understand how shocking the suggestion was in his day, we might imagine in our time an extravagant destination wedding in a fantastic location. Jesus is suggesting that the hosts should invite as guests the locals of the service industry (those who clean the bathrooms in the airport, the wait staff at the restaurants, the hotel room cleaners, etc.) and the homeless of the area instead of the friends and family of the bride and groom!

## Questions of the Week

- 1 When have you been guilty of exalting yourself (maybe very subtly) because of your education, wealth, race, or social status?
- 2 In what area(s) of your life might you be called to humble yourself or find a way to “exalt” those who are “lowly”?

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