Friend, Go Up Higher

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle B

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 14: 1, 7-11.
On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Introductory Prayer:
Lord, I believe in you with a faith that never seeks to test you. I trust in you, hoping to learn to accept and follow your will, even when it does not make sense to the way that I see things. May my love for you and those around me be similar to the love you have shown to me.

Petition:
Lord, please help me to replace my selfishness with love.

1. I Want to Hear All about Myself:
Sooner or later we all experience the displeasure of having to be around someone who is always promoting himself. Perhaps we do it ourselves, without realizing how it disgusts the people around us. I remember working with one such fellow myself. He was the nicest guy in the world otherwise, but he consistently and continually talked about himself. He was his own favorite subject. It was his only noticeable flaw, but a fatal one. I'm sure he didn't realize it. Probably if you asked him if he talked about himself more than other people talk about themselves, he would have answered that he talked about himself about the same amount as others do. He had plenty of other virtues, and I'm sure if he had rid himself of his major flaw he would have been one of the most well-liked people where I worked. But he was always putting himself in first place, and in our hearts we were always putting him in one of the last places.

2. Number One in your Heart:
On the other hand, you sometimes run into people who don't wave their own flag. They seem to exist to support and help others. Maybe you don't always notice when they are around, but you notice the effects. Everyone is happier. There is less stress. People seem less worried. These people grease the wheels. If you need a hand, they'll give it to you and you don't even need to ask. Their support and friendship are givens. You know you can count on them. They are assets wherever they work because they know how to make the people around them more effective. Everybody likes them. They may not have the greatest personality or a lot of social skills, but nobody cares because the goodness seems to just ooze out of them. While they seem unassuming and unimportant, everyone who is around them prizes them highly. Without even realizing it, they are at the highest places in everyone's hearts.

3. Will I Develop my Ambition or my Love?
Which kind of person am I? Am I a shameless self-promoter, always focused on getting as much for Number One as possible? This strategy might work well in a company where people are faceless widgets instead of personalities, where the bottom line is the bottom line, but it is never very successful in real life relationships. Perhaps I do what I can to help others whenever I can, to make others feel good. That is the way to real fulfillment. After all, Jesus said that those who wanted to be first must be the last of all and the servant of all. Have I been foolish enough to think that Jesus was saying that the way to achieve my ambitions is to serve? No way. Jesus isn't concerned with us achieving ambitions, he is telling us how to be first in hearts. If you want to be first in hearts, be a servant of all. If you have the humility to serve others, you will attain to a high place in others hearts. When you take a low place, they will always raise you higher.

Conversation with Christ:
Dear Jesus, I am always trying to serve myself and my ambitions, and you want me to be concerned with serving others. Help me to be more focused on what really matters loving than on what the world prizes empty, self-serving actions.

Resolution:
Today, I will perform some act of service for another person, preferably for someone close to me, preferably without their notice. These are the acts that most deeply express love. Remember, if you expect something in return, even just thanks, it isn't love, it's business.