



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 1st September 2019

In England and Wales:

Prayer for the Care of Creation

Keynote: Jesus teaches true discipleship is found in humility and holiness

Book of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 3: 17-18, 20, 28-29

Ben Sira was a highly respected Jewish scribe and teacher. He wrote this book *'for all who seek instruction.'* The invitation first, or is it maybe a warning? Addressed to the high and mighty, he says, *'Be gentle in carrying out your business, and you will be better loved than a lavish giver. The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly, and then you will find favour with the Lord.'* As for pride, *'there is no cure for the proud man's malady, since an evil growth has taken root in him.'* The lesson is there for us, and as Sirach says, *'The heart of a sensible man will reflect on parables, an attentive ear is the sages' dream!'* We would do well to sit at the feet of this wise one to reflect, and to heed his words.

Responsorial Psalm 67 (68) – a triumphant hymn of praise

Letter to the Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24

Addressing the assembly of the new People of God, the author speaks of the experiences of the people of the Old Covenant, and the past sufferings they endured in contrast with what the people of the New Covenant – the new People of God – will experience: *'What you have come to is nothing known to the senses: not a blazing fire, or a gloom turning to total darkness, or a storm; or trumpeting thunder or the great voice speaking which made everyone that heard it beg that no more be said to them... you have come to God himself, the supreme Judge, and been placed with spirits of the saints who have been made perfect.'* Made perfect by Jesus Christ the new People of God: *'have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... gathered for the festival, with the whole Church in which everyone is a "first-born son" and a citizen of heaven. You have come to God himself... and to Jesus, the mediator who brings a new covenant.'* This 'mystery' of the Church is the great event, the sacrament of God present in the world every day.

Gospel according to Luke 14: 1, 7-14

Invitations to a party or celebration, or to take the 'place of honour', still play an important part in our social lives. Here, Luke offers us Jesus' teaching on who are the invited ones, the elect? Clearly not everyone who comes to the party is one of the 'select', the 'chosen', the 'invited' – to be counted among the favoured ones! Jesus *'had noticed how they picked the places of honour,'* so he told the guests a parable: *'when someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited... No, when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place.'* Here a lesson in humility. But the real punch line comes when Jesus says to his host, *'when you give a lunch or dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations, or rich neighbours... No, when you have a party invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind... that they cannot pay you back means you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again.'* So we learn status in life is not so important. The real party is for all those whom God chooses to call.