

22 Sunday C

August 28, 2022

St. Patrick

This Sunday we learn table manners for the Kingdom. It's a parable—mind you—and it goes like this: you come in, take the lowest place, so that the host might say, **“My friend, move up to a higher position.”**

The German philosopher of the late 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche, poked at such humility and made this critique: **“Those who humble themselves *want to be exalted.*”** (1)

Sly maneuvering in order to get ahead. And, rightly, Nietzsche unmasks such “humility” as a fraud. Jesus, by his own witness, teaches us true humility.

The psychiatrist Robert Coles has written several books and teaches at Harvard University. He also wrote a book about Dorothy Day, she who co-founded the Catholic Worker movement and worked tirelessly for economic justice for the poor. She lived in absolute solidarity with the poor and died in 1980.

While studying in medical school at Harvard, Coles decided to volunteer to “help” the poor; it would look good on his resume. He had heard of the Catholic Worker movement and went to New York to see the famous Dorothy Day.

When Coles arrived at the building housing the Catholic Worker center, he asked to see Dorothy Day herself and was told she was in the kitchen. When he got there, he saw her sitting at a table, talking to a disheveled-looking man who was apparently a homeless street person. Dorothy Day was sitting at a table with this man, listening intently to what he was saying. As Coles listened in, he recognized from his medical training that this mess of a man was a substance-abuse addict of some sort.

Dorothy Day doesn't notice that Coles is at the kitchen's entrance. He stands beside the door. When she finishes listening to the conversation with the street person she stands up and then notices Cole. She asks him, **“Do you want to speak to one of us?”**

Coles wrote that he learned more in that one spontaneous comment than he had in four years at Harvard. **“Do you want to speak to one of us?”** With all her fame Dorothy Day didn’t assume Coles wanted to speak to her. She wasn’t faking it; she simply saw herself and the homeless man on the same level—sister and brother at the same table. (2)

Sisters and brothers at the same table: That’s what *we* are at *this* table. And the last thing that we say together before coming to the table, **“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”** Hopefully none of us is faking our humility. We are truly in no way worthy. We’ve been lovingly placed on the invitation list to *this* table because of our baptismal consecration—done so because Jesus’ **“sprinkled blood speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.”**

Fed at this table splendidly with his very Body and Blood, we make our journey with Jesus to Jerusalem—and to the cross. Along the journey Jesus teaches us that he felt much more at home eating with sinners and tax collectors and outcasts, than with the so-called “virtuous.” He truly saw himself on the same level—sisters and brothers all at the same table.

St. Patrick’s: May we learn table etiquette for the Kingdom!

(1) Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

(2) Taken from “Dorothy Day: An Illustration,” www.deaconsil.com as summarized from Robert Coles, M.D., Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion (Perseus Books, 1989).

General Intercessions

August 28, 2022

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Empower us, your Church, to stand with “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,” as well as immigrants who seek a welcoming homeland; we pray to you, O Lord—

Teach us to ponder your Word, and live it; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bring peace to those who are surrounded by armed conflict, and aid all efforts to end oppression; we pray to you, O Lord—

Make your Church a people of welcome and compassion to those in need, and give your blessing to the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality and to our Tanzania Health Ministry; we pray to you, O Lord—

Grant everlasting peace to all who have died in hope, especially Beverly Douglas, Wanda Donati, and Sister Carlene Marie Stengel; we pray to you, O Lord—