

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
September 1, 2019
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

People like to see the image of the face of Jesus on almost everything. There was a picture taken of snow-covered ground that yielded the silhouette of Jesus' face. Some people imagine seeing the face of Jesus on clouds forming in the sky. When I was young, a neighbor claimed that the cement application on the wall of their house yielded the face of Jesus and so they declared a miracle! All of these, however, are about seeing Jesus only through the power of imagination.

But where do we really find and encounter the Lord Jesus? The Gospel today points to two sure and guaranteed areas of life where Jesus can be found.

The first is this: Jesus can be found in the company of the poor and the needy. This is Jesus' favorite crowd – the poor, the blind, and the lame. It is not surprising that Jesus told his host to invite not only those who are materially blessed, but to open his table to those who cannot repay him. Jesus directed his eyes to the plight of the poor. This is particularly challenging for all of us. When we throw parties, we want to be surrounded by beautiful, pleasant people, those whose presence will facilitate the digestion of food and drink. We avoid irritants to our senses because they will ruin our happy hour. But Jesus was not only hinting at the proper organization of a party guest list. He is describing the Kingdom of God.

In the kingdom of God, the heavenly party, God's table is open to all, especially to the poor. We must imitate the heart of God and receive people with joy, without discrimination. Jesus is found in the company of the poor.

The second venue of encountering Jesus is in the attitude of humility. It is not easy to love the poor. It is not easy to accept people you dislike or avoid. If we pretend, we suffer a nervous breakdown. This is why Jesus emphasizes humility and modesty. The proud and

arrogant believe themselves to be better than others. Only the humble find in others the presence of a brother or sister.

Again this teaching is not mere attitude shift. It is all about the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not for the rich and powerful, but for the humble who recognize in their lives that only God is great and that all are equal in his eyes. Jesus taught and lived this humility all his life and especially through his death. Another example of this is St. Teresa of Calcutta. The Gospel comes to life in her very example of devotion to the poor and humility before God and others. The humble of heart truly know the presence of God.

We are all in search of the Lord. In the Eucharist, we enter into his party. We are all equal. In the Eucharist, we are given the power to be humble in imitation of our Master who came not to be served, but to be our servant. So let us find Jesus in the needy and let us find Jesus by imitating his humility. As he reminded all of us today, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted".