

22C

Some foreign tourists one day visited the home of Beethoven. A young woman among them sat down at the great composer's piano and began to play his Moonlight Sonata. After she had finished, she turned to the old caretaker and said. 'I suppose a great many musicians visit this place every year'. 'Yes', he replied. 'Paderewski, the famous polish pianist, was here last year.' 'And did he play Beethoven's Piano', she asked. 'No' he said, 'he didn't consider himself worthy'

Jesus noticed how the Pharisees picked the places of honour at table. I suppose most of us could put up with sitting half way down the table but surely not the lowest place - that's too near the bone. And yet in today's Gospel Jesus asks us to do precisely that.

As part of our fallen human nature there is a tendency to get ourselves noticed for what we do or who we are. In contrast Jesus says that when we do some good deed for someone we are not to have it trumpeted before us to win the admiration of others. Jesus gave us eight beatitudes but flicking through a spiritual book recently I noticed where the Devil also has beatitudes. One of them runs like this: Blessed are those who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked for what they do, I can use them. That doesn't at all mean we don't thank people.

People generally don't like being overlooked – it's a blow to their pride. But if it happens to us, perhaps we can see it as a grace making us more like Jesus who chose to be last of all and servant of all.

It is interesting to note that after Jesus performed a miracle, he often beat a hasty retreat from the scene. He shunned the limelight because he didn't want to be carried shoulder high

and labelled a celebrity thereby attracting the wrong type of disciple where people would follow him for the wrong reasons.

On one occasion His mother seems to have put him on the spot by asking him to turn water into wine. Jesus was obviously embarrassed by being asked to perform a quick, on-the-spot miracle and told his mother Mary it wasn't the right moment, but deep down he knew he couldn't refuse her. Here we see Jesus being humble enough to forego his own wishes in favour of His mother's, while at the same time keeping quiet about the miracle he'd just performed. Remember the chief steward had no idea where this special vintage came from. There are times in our lives when we'll be asked to sacrifice our own preference, listen to other people's advice and keep quiet about our own accomplishments.

The present Pope, when he was Archbishop, used travel round on the local buses. He lived in a one bedroom flat and mostly did his own cooking. With Francis in the See of Peter I get the feeling that the Lord is calling us to be a more humble church with less of the trappings of the past.

"Learn of me", Jesus says, "because I am meek and humble of heart" I'm sure those who were quite content taking the lowest place in this world will be asked to 'move up higher' in the world to come.