Homily on Luke 14:1–11

My wife loves to watch Home and Garden Television. She enjoys seeing couples buy fixer-upper homes and turn them into something beautiful. I often joke that every couple on these shows looks the same — they all love to entertain. My wife and I are the opposite. We're private, and I'm an introvert who loves coming home to a quiet house where I don't have to talk to anyone after a long day.

A parish I once served had a prayer on the wall that read: *"Jesus is the unseen guest at every meal and in every conversation."* I'm not big on wanting to host people in my home — I'm a terrible cook and an even worse entertainer. I'm not sure how I'd respond if Jesus wanted to come over for dinner. I might start making excuses: *"Lord, the dogs aren't friendly, the dishes are in the sink, and I didn't vacuum."*

Maybe you've felt that way too — that if Jesus came by, your home wouldn't be ready, or your heart wouldn't feel worthy.

For those of you who *do* love to entertain, how would you feel about Jesus as your guest? It might sound wonderful — imagine, God Himself coming to your house for supper! You'd be the envy of the neighborhood.

But I think we can easily romanticize the idea of Jesus as a guest. Scripture paints a different picture.

The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus being invited into homes — and somehow, He always stirs things up. Think of Martha and Mary: Martha does all the work while Mary sits at Jesus' feet, and then Jesus seems to criticize Martha for serving! That's not a great way to win over your host.

Or think of the Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner — only to have the meal interrupted by a weeping woman, a known sinner, who wasn't invited but barges in, weeping on Jesus' feet. She crashes the dinner party and ruins the social atmosphere.

And then there's the time Jesus was teaching inside someone's home and crowds filled every corner. Imagine the mess afterward — trampled flowers, overflowing toilets, broken vases, and hundreds of people poking around your belongings. Then, on top of all that, a group climbs onto your roof, cuts a hole in it, and lowers a paralyzed man down to Jesus. The audacity!

What kind of guest is Jesus when so many hosts end up with broken roofs, unwelcome visitors, and exhausted servants?

And that brings us to today's Gospel — another meal where Jesus, once again, causes trouble. He's been invited to dine with a leader of the Pharisees, but the dinner is full of tension. People are watching Him closely. Even before the meal begins, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath — right in front of everyone. The learned guests are silent when He asks if it's lawful to heal on the Sabbath. They have no answer.

This is a pattern in Jesus' ministry. He asks hard questions and receives silence in return. Like when He asked whether John's baptism was from heaven or from men — no one dared to answer. Jesus isn't the kind of guest who just smiles politely and laughs at our jokes. He challenges our assumptions and confronts the comfort of our routines.

After healing the man, Jesus offers what sounds like dinner etiquette — "Don't take the place of honor, but sit at the lowest seat." At first glance, He sounds like Miss Manners giving social advice. But Jesus isn't teaching table manners — He's revealing the values of the Kingdom of God.

In the Kingdom, greatness comes through humility. Honor isn't claimed; it's given. Throughout His ministry, the apostles often argued about who was greatest among them, still thinking in terms of power and prestige. But Jesus showed them another way. On the night of the Last Supper, He became the host, and they became His guests. Yet even as host, He knelt to wash their feet. The Teacher and Lord — washing the feet of His friends. That's divine hospitality. That's humility made visible.

Jesus often used the image of a banquet to describe Heaven — a table where everyone has a seat, where no one is forgotten, where the last are made first, and where all are honored simply because they are loved by God.

When you and I receive Holy Communion, or even when we pray together here, we are already taking part in that heavenly banquet. We are guests at the Lord's table — not because of what we've done, but because of His mercy.

Every person here — whether strong or weak, talkative or quiet, walking or resting — has a place of honor in God's eyes. You and I are His beloved guests.

Here at this table, the Lord welcomes us just as we are — tired, imperfect, sometimes anxious or introverted — and calls us His friends. The place of honor is not earned; it's given. May we open our hearts to welcome Christ as our guest and allow Him to make His home within us. Amen