

Hebrews 13:1-8

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Knowing your place.

In the early 1960's my aunt and uncle lived in a small 'prefab' bungalow on the outskirts of Walton-on-Thames. We would sometimes go up there all the way from Worthing just for Sunday lunch.

I did not enjoy those visits because of the segregation that took place when we sat down to eat, for when the other family members came along too, there simply was not enough room for us all to fit in one room.

Coupled with this my uncle set high standards of behaviour at the dinner table and he decreed that all 'scruffy urchins' and 'mucky pups' should sit round a table in the kitchen until they could behave with decorum.

That really meant 'all kids were banished.' How I hated sitting with the scraggy and mucky ones. The runny noses, the tears and tantrums, the food flying everywhere and little girls with fairy wings.

Our Gospel reading finds the guests at the Pharisees house jockeying for position around the meal table.

We are not told exactly where Jesus sat but we can see this as a further example of Him having little truck with the prevailing conventions of who deserves to be sitting in the best seats and who should be banished to the next room.

It was clear that the mindset of the day was that the seat of honour was something you could only earn.

In the reading to the Hebrews however, the writer urges that love should be mutually shared with particular attention given to the presence of strangers and that our whole way of life be an invitation of Jesus, which meant never neglecting the opportunity to do good and to reach out to those others might miss.

When our own children came along, I used to tell them that if they didn't watch their step I would set up a special table for them at mealtimes as my uncle did. I think they knew that I was not being serious.

I like the way the tables are laid out for coffee in the Donald Rose Room after the 10.30am service. It's one long table around which we all need to find our own place.

The danger is that you could find yourself squashed in between a 'scruffy urchin' and a 'mucky pup.'

If that ever happens to you, know this, the kingdom of heaven has come close to you in that moment.

With love
Fr Andrew