

[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

November 3, 2019

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“How inscrutable are God’s judgments and how unsearchable his ways!” (Rom 1:34).

The idea of *quid pro quo* that has been much in the news these days is also the central theme of today’s Gospel. When Jesus is invited to dine with a leading Pharisee, he addresses the practice of social climbing by inviting only guests who can reciprocate. He challenges his host to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to his banquets because they cannot return the favor. This generosity will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous.

It is a radical proposal that strikes at the heart of privileged networking that ignores the needs of the poor and disrupts an entire class system based on patronage and family loyalty. A banquet for the poor was unthinkable and useless for advancing one’s status. We can only imagine the reaction of the host as Jesus exposes the cold calculations underlying his dinner and breaks the spell of social schmoozing the guests are engaged in over fine wine and expensive entrees.

Jesus, as always, is representing God’s unconditional love for everyone, a graciousness so immense that no one could ever match it or repay God for it. St. Paul affirms this in today’s first reading: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” God’s mercy to all is a pure gift, undeserved and impossible to repay. All we humans can do to express our gratitude is to imitate God by being unconditionally generous with others.

Jesus is invoking the dream of the Beloved Community, the goal of history where all hierarchies and class distinctions disappear, and all *quid pro quo* arrangements are

overwhelmed by God's unfathomable love for every living being. This is the vision of the Beatitudes, where a complete reversal of all human priorities will occur as the meek and humble, sorrowful, peace and justice-loving and persecuted are celebrated. Welcome to the Lord's banquet.

We anticipate and advance this promise each time we break norms and social codes with open table fellowship, by welcoming everyone, celebrating diversity, expanding the circle to include the marginalized and even our enemies. We make visible the future God is calling us toward, and in return, God gives us a glimpse and a taste of heaven.

Advertisement