



## Father Kolbe and the Lowest Place

*On a Sabbath he went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully... He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table... when you are invited, go and take the lowest. Luke 14: 1, 7-14*

The banquet room described here is a metaphor for life. One desires to have the best spot, to conquer and get first place, even to prevail over others and dominate. Win, win, win... at any cost. One enters the banquet, life, the group, and our communities in an attitude of real competition.

Jesus reacts, and proposes a different logic:

*When you are invited, for example to a banquet, go and sit in the lowest place.* This is not for the sake of false humility, but to say to the other: "First you and after me; you are more important than I. I'll go here – not because I am worthless – but only that you may be served first and better.

The lowest place has been considered by Rabbis to be the place from which God gave of himself to make room for creatures. Analogously, the lowest place becomes the place that makes space for others. It is the place from which we love more deeply. It is the place where Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. God serves me! It is a dizzying truth, and at the same time, disregarded. Why?

The search for first place, the greatest spot, is such a strong passion that it penetrates many hearts. It is necessary, therefore, to be vigilant in understanding that only those who serve, will reign. They will behold the Face of God.

Father Kolbe occupied the lowest place his entire life. Here are only a few examples:

"In the concentration camp, when it was time to eat, Father Kolbe moved forward when he saw that there was more watery, nutrition-less broth. Conversely, he moved back and left space for others when there was something more substantial."

What is the lowest place? It is that place that no one wants.

Father Kolbe literally took the place that no one wanted when he traded places with a condemned man.

In his Spiritual Exercises of 1918, he wrote: "...glories, esteem, appreciation of others... rejoice when they are praised... Consider every brother (and sister) greater than yourself, and you the least of all. Recognize every one as greater than you, not only as a thought, but also in exterior attitude..."<sup>1</sup>

According to the Vatican Archives, this very successful editor was "very humble." "Every word of approval received, he directed to the Immaculata, as the true author, for whom he was only the simply executor. He fled from praise, putting himself in the least place. One couldn't make him take a higher post."

Father Kolbe asks us, through his life and writings, to find all things in God. He is our only joy.

Only in this way will true unity be born among us.

**Angela Esposito**

*Fr. Kolbe Missionary of the Immaculata  
For the Community of Harmęże, Poland*

<sup>1</sup> Sk 1969.