

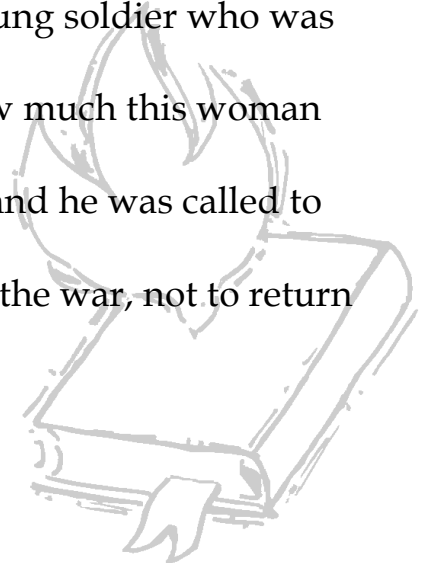
**Homily**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT - C**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
October 22-23, 2022

Sir 35: 12-14, 16-18  
Ps 34: 2-3, 17-18, 19, 23  
2 Tm 4: 6-8, 16-18  
Lk 18: 9-14

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I caught a movie on the television last week that I first saw in 1988, a movie that won the Academy Award that year for Best Foreign Film. I normally don't watch foreign films with subtitles because it often strains my eyes, but this film was too good to pass up. The movie is called "Babette's Feast," and I would like to talk about that movie today, especially because it connects directly to today's gospel.

The movie takes place in 1871 in the country of Denmark. The story is about two women who help their father run a Lutheran parish in a small, rural village. One of these women sacrificed much to help out her father. She was abandoned in her youth by a young soldier who was deeply in love with her. The soldier realized how much this woman meant to him, but there was a war to be fought and he was called to service. So the soldier left the woman to fight in the war, not to return for a very long time.



The women of the house became lonely, but were also very charitable to the people of their town. They lived out their Christian faith and shared that faith with the men and women around them. So when a French woman came to their doorstep, poor and without a place to live, the women accepted her into their home and gave her a place to rest her head in return for simple housekeeping services the woman performed.

This service lasted 20 years. As we pick up the story 20 years later, the war was coming to an end and things were returning to normal. Into the transition of peace time, something happened to the French woman that changed her life – she received a letter stating that she had won 10,000 francs in the French lottery. This was a huge amount of money for the woman; with this money, this French woman would be able to start her life over again and return to her native land.

The second half of the movie tells us how the French woman thanked the people that took care of her through an exquisite French dinner, ergo the title, “Babette’s Feast.” We find out that this French woman was once a head chef in the greatest restaurant in France. This woman was a culinary genius and she wished to give back to the simple townsfolk a

gift beyond all imagination. So the woman planned the meal of a lifetime.

The people of the town watched this simple woman weave her spell. The townsfolk became amazed at the kinds of ingredients this chef acquired for this fine meal – live turtles, finely-aged wine and champagne, delicacies that had never been tasted in such a provincial town. Through a dream, one of the women in this house came to believe that this feast was not a simple gift from their housekeeper, but a secret spell from the devil, and that anyone who succumbed to the taste of the food would lose their soul.

So the women of the house made a pact with the others that joined them for dinner that no one would comment on the food. No one would allow their taste buds to recognize the food. If they did not relish in the food, then the devil could not consume them.

At this dinner came a twelfth guest, a soldier who left the town twenty years earlier but returned from the war a general. This was the same man who felt affection for one of the women in the house. In the movie, this general fought with his younger self as to whether he should

have left his love for the sake of the war and came back to Denmark to reconcile with his younger self.

It happened that this general knew of this French chef's restaurant, for he had eaten at the restaurant before. The general realized what kind of meal he was being served. Turtle soup, roasted quail stuffed with truffles, exquisite pastries and fine wine – this was the greatest meal he would ever eat. And as the other eleven guests at table made not one remark about the food, the general realized what gift had beset him at the dinner table.

At the end of the meal, the general arose and spoke to the others. He told the other guests that the meal they had consumed was not the work of the devil, nor was it a simple gift from a poor woman. This meal was a gift from the heart, a gift from the soul, a gift of love that would unite these people forever. He then turned to his love and professed his deep love. He told his love that though they might not ever see each other again, his heart would always be present at this dinner table, for the Spirit of God had united them in this meal. The general then left the

village, reconciling with his younger self and professing his love for this woman and for life.

Once these words were spoken, the hearts of the other guests opened. The people realized the full weight of the gift they had been given. The people responded by singing and dancing in the town square, sharing this spirit with each other. The woman of the house apologized to the French chef and remarked about the great gift they had received. The woman wished the chef well as she began her life again in France and gave her God's blessing.

However, the chef responded to the woman that she wouldn't return to France, for the woman had no money. The chef replied that the cost of an exquisite French dinner for 12 cost 10,000 francs and that she had spent her lottery winnings on giving back to her friends. She gave all that she had back to her community because they had given so much to her in return.

This story is no different than the publican in today's gospel, a man so filled with God's spirit that he wanted to give something back. The man did not respond in pride. He did not chastise others or condemn

others. All the man did was beat his breast and say, “Forgive me, Lord, for I am a sinner.” That is all God asks of us, to respond in humility in the same way that God responds to us.

Look at Christ on the cross. Look at Christ in the tabernacle or at the altar or in our hearts. Christ has humbly come down from heaven to rest in our hearts and asks of us to do the same for each other. To pour out our lives in faith – that is the true response we make to God every time we come to Church and live what we believe.

I am sure that not all of us have 10,000 francs to give. But we are all able, in some way, to give from our hearts in a spirit of humility. Luke tells us that those who are humble will be rewarded and those who are not will have problems in life. As we gather around this great banquet table to share in the greatest feast of all, let us learn the lesson of humility. Let us serve others in a spirit of love. This is how we emulate the gospel message. This is how we pray today.