


Piero Alfonso Carlo Masolo, “*Sarai beato perché non hanno da ricambiarti*” (Lc 14,14). *Dal simposio (Lc 14,1–24) alla convivialità nella duplice opera lucana* (Studi e ricerche. Sezione teologica; Assisi: Cittadella 2024). Pp. 330. € 20,50. ISBN 978-88-308-1931-3

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The subject of the monograph is the Lukan pericope describing events during one of the meals that Jesus eats with a representative of the Pharisees in the Gospel of St Luke, specifically in 14:1–24. The issue is discussed extensively and concerns not only all descriptions of Jesus’ meals in the Third Gospel before Luke 14 (5:29–32; 7:36–50; 9:10–17; 10:38–42; 11:37–54) and after it (15:23–32; 16:19–21; 22:14–38; 24:28–32; 24:41–43), but also in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (16:34; 20:7–11; 27:33–38), which proves the originality of this study. It is worth mentioning that the motif of meals and eating appears more frequently in Luke-Acts than in the gospels of the other synoptics. However, a comprehensive overview of this important issue has been lacking until now. The word ‘convivialità’ used in the title has its English equivalent – conviviality. It denotes the quality of being cordial and friendly in a social setting.

The very theme of the work described here draws on a famous article by Xavier De Meeus (“Composition de Luc XIV et genre symposiaque,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 37 [1961] 847–870), who identified the scene in question as the classical Greek literary genre of symposium, since the pericope contains a series of parables told in the context of a meal, making it similar to this genre. Luke describes similar characters and includes motifs that appear in the symposia of Plato, Xenophon or Apuleius. During these meetings, it was common practice to engage in various debates. In his presentation of *status quaestionis*, the author also mentions David P. Moessner’s work – a classic monograph for studies on the Third Gospel – *Lord of the Banquet. The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1989), which, contrary to its title, does not focus primarily on the theme of meals, but rather on the presentation of the figure of Jesus in the section on the journey to Jerusalem. Moessner shows the connection between the motif of Jesus’ meals and travel. Another important work for Masolo is the latest monograph on this subject, namely Thomas Esposito’s work entitled *Jesus’ Meals with Pharisees and Their Liturgical Roots* (Analecta Biblica 209; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2015). Jesus’ three meals with the Pharisees are discussed extensively in this work,

including Luke 14:1–24. At the very beginning of his work, Esposito rejects the classification of this pericope as a symposium – unfortunately, Masolo does not respond to this criticism, although he criticises Esposito’s main thesis (p. 37).

The author uses the method of narrative criticism, based on the book by Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici* (Rome: Borla 2011). He pays particular attention to the effect the text has on the implied reader and analyses the *mise en abyme* technique used in Luke 14. The author analyses the text from the perspective of a first-time reader who demonstrates an understanding of the nature of a symposium (p. 42). The choice of narrative criticism as the leading tool of analysis is appropriate for the objectives of this monograph.

The first chapter (*Articolazione del testo*) is unusual in that it does not use the chosen method of analysis. This part of the work contains a philological analysis of the vocabulary used to describe the meal scenes, which, in turn, is valuable in narrative criticism, as it is a kind of ‘pact’ or ‘agreement’ (*patto narrativo*) between the text and the reader. The analysed terms refer not only to acts of eating, but also inviting, resting as a gesture characteristic of feasts at that time, tasting, preparing and serving meals, as well as general vocabulary related to feasting. In the second subsection of the chapter, the author describes the characters appearing in the scene, as well as those appearing in Jesus’ story. It also analyses the place and time of action, circumstances, customs, and the goal that the hosts and guests have in mind.

The second chapter, in its first part, analyses the meal scenes in the Galilean section preceding Luke 14, especially 5:29–32; 7:36–50. To a lesser extent, it studies the description of the multiplication of bread in 9:10–17, which has a different, more proleptic character, foreshadowing the Last Supper. The feast at the house of Levi is an opportunity to present the purpose of Jesus’ mission – the divine Physician who came to call sinners to repentance. The Pharisees and scribes oppose Jesus’ disciples and Jesus Himself because of the meal shared with sinners. The double juxtaposition of the motifs of fasting and eating and drinking (5:33), together with the metaphor of the bridegroom (5:34), already foreshadows the Passion. The reference to new wine emphasises that the extensive use of meal-related terminology is a means by which Jesus explains his teaching. Luke 7:36–50 discusses Jesus’ identity as a prophet and the issues of forgiveness and love. Once again, a shared meal becomes an opportunity for discussion and confrontation. The second, shorter part of the chapter deals with the section called Journey to Jerusalem. In its initial phase, the author of the Gospel makes many references to meals – in 9:52; 10:7; 10:38–42; 11:2; 11:5, 8, 11 – which are not, however, the main theme of the pericopes. Nevertheless, the monograph devotes more space to Jesus’ second meal with the representative of the Pharisees in 11:37–54. This scene is dominated by open hostility between Christ and the Pharisee faction. According to Masolo, the author of the Gospel combines in this pericope the genre of symposium with a Hebrew form of speech beginning with the word ‘woe’ (a prophetic judgement).

The third chapter – *Il simposio lucano* – constitutes the largest part of the work and forms the core of its deliberations. The author methodically applies the principles of narrative

analysis and defines the genre found in Luke 14:1–24 as a quadruple chreia: (1) first, 'dramatic' (*cria drammatica*) 14:1–6, which describes the healing in the Pharisee's house and is an introduction to the next three, which are parables of Jesus; (2) 14:7–11: about guests taking seats; (3) 14:12–14: about the host inviting guests; (4) 14:15–24: about the great banquet. The thematic and narrative unity of the entire fragment is clear, and the connections and parallelisms between the individual parts are well highlighted. Masolo meticulously employs, although he does not explicitly mention it, the method of close reading and treats each verse separately, devoting a subsection to it.

The author also shows key intratextual references in Luke 14:1–6 to earlier, analogous scenes, especially 6:6–11 and 13:10–17 (pp. 143–145), which is justified by the fact that these three scenes are the only accounts of miracles in the Gospel of Luke that deal with the theme of the Sabbath. Luke 14:1–6 introduces the confrontation with the Pharisees. The second moment in the narrative, 14:7–11, is defined as a chreia with two discourses: the first called apotreptic, describing what is done, and the second called protreptic, indicating what should be done (*discorso apotrettico e protrettico*). It ends with a summarising maxim in 14:11 (p. 163). This type of double discourse is also present in the third moment of the narrative about reciprocity when inviting guests to a feast, while the final speech is the most elaborate parable. Jesus' three discourses are addressed to different characters: the first is general in nature and addressed to everyone, the second is addressed to the host, and the third is a response to a question from a participant in the feast. The first speech about taking seats raises the issue of the social status of those invited, as well as pride and humility, and calls for a change of mentality. Jesus' second discourse on inviting guests also contrasts two social groups: the wealthy and those related to them, and the marginalised. Luke 14:12–14 refers not only to a change of mentality, but also to the last things in 14:14b, where there is a statement about repayment at the time of the resurrection.

The longest parable about the great banquet (14:15–24) refers to motifs from previous scenes and is described by the author as a social revolution and an eschatological feast. Its four main theses are: (1) Israel's leadership is wasting an opportunity for salvation, (2) the Kingdom does not reject those who are invited, (3) it is not Jesus who excludes, (4) despite adversity, the banquet takes place. The parable is a chreia that begins with a question (14:15) and ends with a general statement that applies to those present at the Pharisee's house, as emphasised by the phrase 'I tell you' (14:24) spoken emphatically to them. Luke places the parable between a blessing and an admonishing remark. The blessing in 14:14 (to which the next one in 14:15 refers) is doubly paradoxical, as it suggests that happiness lies in the absence of repayment, which will actually be granted at the resurrection. The final remark in 14:24 allows for a re-reading of the entire parable and prompts the reader to ask: will there be a place for me at this feast, which is the feast of Jesus? This is a question about man's attitude towards others and also concerns Christ's disciples. It emphasises the need to look for people in unexpected places and to invite even those whom no one else would invite. By using the *mise en abyme* technique, Masolo gives the pericope 14:1–24 many overlapping meanings that the implied reader can relate to themselves.

The final chapter deals with all the meal-related scenes in the last part of Luke's diptych. A significant scene of this type before the Passion is the Last Supper, which is presented as a foreshadowing of the banquet of the kingdom (*banchetto del regno*). Three motifs converge in this scene: the plan of salvation, the necessity of fulfilment, and *convivialità*. The next two scenes analysed in detail concern the encounters with the Risen Christ and the meals with the disciples in Emmaus and later in Jerusalem in Luke 24. These meals allude to the Eucharist and Christ's salvific action (Emmaus) and are an opportunity for final teachings (24:36–49). In the Acts of the Apostles, references to communal meals are frequent and appear from the beginning. Among many such scenes, it is worth highlighting the summaries that talk about the breaking of bread together, as well as the episode with Cornelius, which shows that pagans can also participate in communal meals, which is confirmed in chapter 15 during the scene of the so-called 'Council of Jerusalem'. The next chapter contains an episode that is significant for the main thesis of the work. It describes Paul's missionary activity no longer in the synagogue, but in the *oikos* of Lydia and the converted guard (Acts 16:33–34; 16:40). The author calls the meal at the latter's house after his baptism quasi-liturgical (p. 263). This *convivialità* is the salvific sign, the heart of the scene. The same happens in the scene in Troas in Acts 20, where the Eucharistic gesture of breaking bread is also accompanied by this sociable friendliness. *Convivialità* often accompanies salvation in Luke's work, as can also be seen in the last discussed scene in Acts 27:33–38, where the breaking of bread becomes in itself a source of salvation. Luke probably refers here to the Eucharistic banquet.

Overall, Masolo's work has undeniable merit. It is a comprehensive study of a motif that frequently appears in Luke's diptych and demonstrates its theological significance. The *convivialità* featured in the title is linked to the main message conveyed by Jesus and is often associated with the theme of salvation. The meticulous exegesis of Luke 14:1–24 and most of the thirteen meal scenes is a creative contribution to the study of Luke's diptych. The analysis covered not only scenes describing Jesus' meals, but also parables relevant to this topic, such as Luke 15:11–38 and 16:19–31. The monograph's contribution to Lukan exegesis lies in its focus on sociable friendliness and showing its significance. The analysis of Luke 14:1–24 itself is creative and meticulous, as it shows how the scene of the meal with the healing at the beginning and the following parables of Jesus are interrelated and, thanks to *mise en abyme*, have more meanings than if they were considered separately.

However, certain objections can be raised in relation to the work. The study is narrative, but since the term 'symposium' appears in the title, it was worth examining in detail whether Luke 14:1–24 belongs to this genre. Esposito's work casts serious doubt on this classification, and Masolo's monograph, unfortunately, does not address this objection at all. The author, however, often uses the names of other Greek genres, such as *chreia* and *syncrisis*. Another source of dissatisfaction is the lack of sufficient attention paid to an issue that seems important for the work: when does the phrase 'breaking bread' refer to the Eucharist, and when does it refer to a simple meal? This issue is important in the Acts of the Apostles and is the subject of differing opinions. Masolo sees a connection between

convivialità and salvation, but does not resolve whether the summaries in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles and the later scenes describe the first Eucharists or not.

Since the analysed work adopts narrative criticism methods, it seems that there is also a lack of distinction between scenes in which *convivialità* is an important motif and those in which it is secondary. For example, in Luke 9:10–17, there is no narrative emphasis on *convivialità*. Of course, the presence of similar vocabulary is a link between the scenes analysed in the work, but it would be more consistent with the chosen narrative method to organise the material related to meals according to a narrative criterion, such as the theory of the plot. As the author himself points out (p. 286), the choice of the title scene is not dictated by any criteria derived from narrative criticism, but rather by its exemplary nature (this is more of a criterion from form criticism). It contains elements characteristic of meal scenes: the arrival of Jesus as the guest of honour, who becomes the protagonist, dialogue and teaching, and the use of vocabulary related to feasting.

These observations do not detract from the undoubted value of the work, which is coherent and very comprehensive. Masolo's monograph will be an indispensable point of reference for scholars who study meal scenes, broadly understood issues of salvation in Luke-Acts, and the titular *convivialità*, or sociable friendliness, which is more significant for the meaning of Luke's diptych than it may seem at first reading. Drawing attention to this issue is an undeniable merit of Masolo's monograph.

