

28th Sunday: Mt. 22-1-14- COME TO THE FEAST

Today's gospel presents us with the parable of the wedding feast. The parable shows us three possible kinds of guests. There are the guests, who initially accept the invitation; but when the time comes to honor the invitation, they draw back. There are the guests without wedding garments, who attend the feast, but do not make any efforts to prepare for full participation in the wedding party. Then there are the guests with wedding garments, who make the necessary preparations to present themselves fit for the wedding party of the king.

I remember a story: One day, an old beggar saw an invitation outside the king's palace gate. The king was giving a great dinner. Anyone dressed in a royal garment was invited to the party. The beggar wished to join the party but he did not have the royal garment. So, he decided to go to the palace and ask the king to give him a garment. He went to the palace and said to the guard, "Sir, I would like to speak to the king." The guard informed the king and the king came to see the beggar. The beggar said, "I really wish to attend the banquet, but I have no royal garment to wear." The king said, "You have been a wise person by coming to meet me." The king gave him a royal garment and told him, "You are now eligible to attend the king's banquet tomorrow night." "But even more important, you will never need any other clothes; this garment will last forever." So, you can give up your dirty clothes and old bag. The beggar was so excited and happy to attend the party. But, as he started to leave from the palace, he looked back at his dirty clothes and bag on the floor and he thought, "What if the king was said wrong? What will I do if I need my old clothes again?" So suddenly, he gathered his old dirty bag and went to the party. However, he could not enjoy the party because he was still carrying and focusing on his old dirty bag instead of enjoying the party!

This story gives us the moral message that: We cannot hold on to our old unnecessary dirty baggage and at the same time enjoy the festivities. When we "put on Christ," in our lives, we must let go of our old sinful lives and our old ways of living. If we are holding on to our past sins and having a hard time letting go, we cannot enjoy God's kingdom. We must give up unnecessary guilt feelings, revenge, anger, and bad habits!

In the parable, the guests not wearing wedding garments are physically at the party, but their minds and spirits are not there. They are disturbed and worried about unnecessary things. They are at the feast, but they are not in the mood for

feasting. Jesus hates this kind of hypocritical attitude. God's invitation is grace and grace is a free gift, but it also demands a big responsibility from each of us.

There are the guests, who attend the wedding feast and take care to appear in the proper wedding garments and they enjoy the wedding party. The wedding garments signify our repentance and changes of heart and mind. Also, the wedding garment means the garment of love, the garment of forgiveness, the garment of generosity and kindness, and God's grace; these are the goodness we need to enter into God's kingdom. These are the only people, who have fun and enjoy the party.

Today's gospel gives us the message that those, who are keeping away from the Lord's Supper, are missing the joy of life. To those of us, who have accepted the invitation to come for the feast, this parable warns us not to take God's grace for granted but to clean ourselves and become the most beautiful persons we can be in God's sight. So, let us find a time and give priority to participate in God's wedding feast!

This message is the same as St. Paul's: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."