

## **28<sup>TH</sup> Sunday of in Ordinary Time A/2008**

Food and drink are an important part of our social life. When people have parties, they equally have an opportunity to socialize, to meet and make friends, to share ideas and exchange over different issues they are confronted with in life. For both the guests and the hosts, parties and banquets can be an expression of the joy of being together, as friends and family, but from which people build strong relationships with one another.

Today's readings tell us that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of joy and happiness. But it is not a fleeting happiness, a short-lived joy like that we experience in our human celebrations when we have parties. The joy that God gives will never fade; it is eternal.

The first reading describes such a joy in terms of a banquet that God will organize on his holy mountain for all the peoples of the earth. In that time God will destroy any discomfort that prevents the happiness of his people. He will destroy death forever and will wipe away any tear from the face of his beloved ones. He will forgive all the sins of his people and let them rejoice and be glad as he saves them.

In order to have access to that joy, we have to respond positively to God's invitation and to act accordingly. That's the point of today's Gospel through the parable of the invited guests.

First of all, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. While everything was ready for the feast, the guests found many excuses for declining the invitation and honoring their host. When summoned by the servants of the king to come, some mistreated the servants, others killed the rest. Because the celebration was important, the king ended up by sending out other servants to collect from the streets and the highway anybody they could find so that the feast might take place.

As it was with the parables we read for the last three Sundays, the historical context of this parable refers to the history of salvation. The invited guests who refused to come represent the Israelites. For years, God has chosen Israel to be his own people among all the nations of the earth. In order to keep them in the spirit of Covenant, he sent them the prophets, but they mistreated some and killed others.

When the time came for God to fulfill his promise made to their ancestor to send a Messiah, they refused to accept the son of God. Because of that refusal, God's invitation was directed to the sinners and the gentiles who never expected such a thing to happen to them. From the main roads of the world where they lived, God brought them to him and they believed in him through Jesus Christ.

Besides this historical context, today's parable has much to teach us. First of all, it reminds us that our call to be Christians is an invitation to a joyful feast and not to a gloomy event. God's invitation is that we share in the joy of his kingdom. Those who refuse to accept the invitation miss the joy of knowing God and of sharing in his kingdom.

Second, the parable reminds us that the things which prevent people from answering Jesus' invitation are not always bad in themselves. For instance, one of the invited guests in the parable went to his farm, the other to his business. These are legitimate things people have to do in order to provide for their needs. The problem, however, is that as legitimate as these activities might be, they should not become an obstacle between God and us. Of course, we have to take care of ourselves and of our business, but not at the detriment of our eternal life. We need to put some priority in our relationship with God. We have to put a hierarchy in our business so that God has a privileged place in everything we do.

When the invited guests killed the servants sent to them, the king in his anger dispatched his troops who destroyed those murderers and burned their city. This event refers historically to the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem that was interpreted as God's punishment for the unbelief of the Israelites.. However, we have to recognize that if we have to respond to the call of God to believe in him, it should be out of love and not out of fear of punishment. To take the punishment as the main motive that drives our faith is to miss the point of the reality of God's kingdom. Of course, when people refuse the invitation of Christ, they will certainly be confronted with the truth of their eternal perdition. But the pain they will feel will be more in the impossibility of sharing in the joy of God in heaven than in the things they suffer.

It is astonishing to realize that one of the guests is rejected by the king for not having an appropriate dress for the feast. This is astonishing precisely because all the guests have been taken from the main roads without any preparation at all. The point here is that the acceptance of the invitation is not enough to save us; we still have to live according to that invitation. In that sense, the dress is the symbol of inner attitude those who are called should have so that it corresponds to God's law. That is why at the end, there is a warning: "Many are invited, but few are chosen". It is not God who discriminately chooses us, but we let ourselves be chosen by our behavior before God.

All that helps us understand that God's call is gratuitous, but it is demanding. Our joy is true because Christ is in our midst, but this joy will attain its fulfillment only in heaven. This time is a period of preparation, a time of hope. Even though we have to go through suffering and pain, we know that all will be changed for the best. It will be ok.

St Paul gives an example of such hope in his life. He was able to live in abundance as well as in poverty, because in every situation he has Christ with him. That's what we have to do also, knowing that we can do everything with him who strengthens us. May God bless you all!

**Isaiah 25, 6-10a; Philippians 4, 12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22, 1-14**



Homily Date: October 12, 2008

© 2008 – Father Felicien Ilunga Mbala

Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)

Document Name: 20081012homily.pdf