

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2020

I want to start this homily with the first reading of today. There is a something big coming up ahead of us, something unseen by our eyes, something unheard of with our ears, something unimaginable with our minds, a joy greater than all the joys we have enjoyed in our lives.

Isaiah describes that joy as a banquet that God has prepared on his holy Mountain for those who love him. When that joy will be fulfilled, there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more death. God will wipe away the tears from every face and the veil of sadness will be removed from the whole earth.

It is that joy that Jesus describes in today's parable. Jesus compares the joy of the Kingdom of God to a wedding feast to which all, good and bad alike, are invited. Unfortunately, the invited guests refuse to come. They certainly have their reason in doing so. For them, their business is more important than the invitation given them.

As it appears, the things that people like the most to do, which apparently have nothing dangerous in them, can become an obstacle in the acceptance of the Kingdom of God. Who would imagine that a farm or another business could stand between a man and God? Who would ever think that those small things of ours we love and do can prevent us to grow in our relationship with God?

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.

Even if the invited guests have refused to come, the King is not discouraged. He knows that this feast is very important. The guests might not realize it, but the king knows it for sure. It is all about eternal salvation. How would not God insist that we come to our eternal salvation? That is why in spite of the refusal from the first guests, the King, in his bounty, sends out other servants to find other guests from the streets and the main roads.

This insistence of the King so that the wedding hall might be full of people is one of the foundations of the work of evangelization. We evangelize so that men and women may come to know God, live by his patterns and receive eternal salvation. As long as there will be people who have not yet accepted God and live far from him, God will insist again and again that they might be preached to and brought to him. We will never neglect such a job without putting in danger the salvation of many of our brothers and sisters.

The general context of the parable refers to the history of salvation as related to the election of Jewish people and the entry of the pagans into the church. In order to save his people, God sent to the Jewish people many prophets to instruct them and to keep them faithful to the Covenant. Many times, Israel ignored not only God's message, but also at times people resisted the prophets and killed some. Even when God sent his own Son, Jesus, this changed nothing. Hence, the entry of the gentiles and the pagans into the church, which is symbolized in the parable by the people picked up from the streets and the main roads.

What is astonishing in the Gospel is the condemnation of one of the guests for not having a wedding garment. If all were picked up from the roads, why, then, to condemn one as not having the wedding garment? Is not that being unfair to him?

It is here that the point of the parable lies. In fact, those who accept God's invitation risk failure if they do not accept also its logic and its demands. When we accept God we have to change our lives. We cannot be with one foot inside and another outside. If we don't change, we run the risk of being kicked out and deprived from entering the banquet hall.

The wedding garment stands for new attitude, new behavior and new way of living according to the precepts of Jesus. We cannot become Jesus' disciples and keep acting as though nothing happened in our life. As Christians we must be aware of our responsibility; if we do not put on the new way of being and living as the "new suit" of the sons of the kingdom, we destroy our own life. This is a pressing invitation to conversion.

It is in the same way we have to understand the last verse of the Gospel when Jesus Says that "*Many are invited, but few are chosen*". It does not mean that God calls many to him and, then, chooses just only a few among them for the Kingdom. The criteria which make us worthy of God's kingdom are very simple, namely to conform our life to the values of God's kingdom, to observe the commandments and to love our fellows, do to them what we would like to be done to us. It is we who make ourselves chosen by the Lord when we live in a godly manner. If we live in an ungodly way we will be kicked out.

In that sense, our baptism, by which we are made coheirs with Jesus, is not enough if we don't fulfill our baptismal promises. Here Jesus is not speaking of those who will enter paradise and those who will be left out. He only wants to draw our attention to the risk of saying yes in words, but, then, failing to repent of our sins.

Let me finish by repeating some of the truths Jesus brings to us today. Salvation is given to each one of us, because God calls us all, bad and good, to the joy of Kingdom. However this call is demanding; it requires change and conversion of heart, which is materialized in the way we live. In order to be truly Christ's disciples, we have to change our lives according to the demands of the Gospel.

Even if it is true that God calls good and bad alike, no one has the right to be complacent. We have all to change in order to deserve the joy of the Kingdom. On this time of health crisis, let us ask God to heal our world and fulfill the promise of his kingdom. May he help us work together for our conversion so that we may deserve the joy he has prepared for us! God bless you all!

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



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