



**Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Church**  
**La Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de los Lagos**

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Sisters and brothers,

There are many ways that we use to express our friendship with another person. We want to show our gratitude that the person is a part of our life. And one of these ways is through a shared meal: to invite the person to lunch or dinner, or, on a really special occasion, to prepare a party or banquet in their honor. To sit down together at the same table, to share some food, or just a drink, a cup of coffee, can be a very effective means to celebrate a relationship with a loved one.

Scripture also, frequently, uses the image of the banquet. The idea is used to communicate the *abundance* we will find in the kingdom of heaven, and the *joy* of those who will participate in it. It is of this kind of banquet that the prophet Isaiah speaks today. He announces the Kingdom as a great gathering to which God invites all peoples, so they may share "a feast of rich food and choice wines." It is a time and a place of inexpressible joyfulness, people gathered around a table that overflows with abundance of life and happiness, a gathering to which are invited "all peoples", without exception.

This "time and place", this banquet, is made present with the coming of Christ into our world. He comes to establish the Kingdom, to invite all people, and to invite them to help make the Kingdom a reality. Today's gospel speaks of the "wedding feast" of the Son, to which all are invited. But those who first receive the invitation refuse to attend. They are too busy with their own enterprises. The coming of the Son, to share in his life, matters little to them. In these invitees we can see the chief priests and elders of the people. And with them, we can see so many people down through history who cannot or will not accept the saving message of the Kingdom.

Nevertheless, the banquet is prepared, and it is opened to all the people who wish to take part in it. "Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find." A clear demonstration of the universality of God's Kingdom. In it there is room for all. Each one of us, regardless of our position in society, we have a place reserved in this banquet of the Kingdom. And this is good news: the doors of the banquet are open for all. But a challenge exists nonetheless. Because we have to ask ourselves if we have really accepted his invitation. Let us not forget that the king expels the one found without a wedding garment.

Let us be clear, this parable is not about wearing clothes. It is about wearing Jesus Christ. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," St. Paul tells the Romans, and the Galatians, and the Colossians, and the Ephesians. The man who came without the proper clothes is the Christian in name only, who refuses to put on Jesus Christ throughout his life. This is the person who accepts the invitation of the Lord, but refuses to exercise his or her responsibility to *be* a Christian toward others

We are invited to share the intimacy of the Banquet of Heaven. We are invited into God's presence. God expects us to wear our Christianity. The way we respond to His Love must be evident to the world. People should know that we are Christians by the way we live our lives.

Wearing our Christianity is a solution to the problem of polarization in our society. When we identify ourselves first as Christians rather than as members of this or that political party or as liberal or conservative, then our primary mode of action will be to treat others with the kindness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is the solution to all our society's needs. If we really want to heal our country's ills, we need to wear the garment of the Lord.

How easily we can claim to be Christian, without much concern for others. We even raise walls and trace boundaries in order to free ourselves from those we would consider "those others", or our "enemies". But for a citizen of the Kingdom, there cannot exist "strangers" or "enemies". Moreover, as citizens of God's Kingdom, we are called to *increase* brotherhood/sisterhood, friendship, and unity among all peoples. And we are called to do so in such a way as to make God's Kingdom present in our world, here and now, his Kingdom of love and of peace.

In a very particular way, Christ calls us as his disciples to share the banquet of the Holy Eucharist. Neither is there anyone excluded from this banquet. But it is the responsibility of each one of us to accept the conditions that will allow us to worthily share the Body and Blood of the Lord. And here again we are able to listen to Christ speak to us of brotherhood/sisterhood, of unconditional acceptance of other persons, of love and service, of surrender and friendship. And not forgetting that all this ought to be lived not only in the church, but also in our daily life.

When we stop being dressed in charity and service, we appear like the man who enters the banquet hall without a wedding garment. There was no place for him. And neither will there be for those who think they have a right to organize their lives according to their own personal preferences, and not according to the demands of Christ and his Gospel. It is not enough to be invited – everyone is. We must put on the wedding garment, put on Christ, put over our minds and hearts his Beatitude values of poverty of spirit, of humility, of mercy and forgiveness, of peace-making, and, above all, of charity toward our neighbor.

The feast is ready. We have been invited. Let us not be left in the darkness outside. Let us put on the seamless garment of Christ, of unconditional respect and care toward our every neighbor. Let us worry a bit less about our material concerns. Let us think about being with Christ, living as members of his kingdom. Let us long to sit at his table, with people of every color, every tongue, every culture. Let us make the Eucharist the source of our identity as a Catholic people. Let us come to the feast. Let us become what we dare to eat. And let us carry that feast, in our hearts, out into our world. Let us *be* Eucharist for others, convincing signs that the Kingdom is truly among us.

With peace and prayers,  
Fr. Chris