

From the Homily Library of Fr. Callistus Iyorembor

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A – October 12, 2020

Parable of the Wedding Banquet

In the last couple of weeks, we have had the opportunity to read many of the parables Jesus preached. We established that parables, by their very nature, are very puzzling and disturbing. Well today we have another parable that is not only puzzling but very shocking and strange; I am talking about the famous parable of the wedding banquet which I just read. You know the story.

It is about a king who gives a wedding banquet for his Son, so he sends out messengers to invite people and they say “No, I can’t come. I got this, I got that.” Then a second time when he sends messengers out to invite people, not only did they not come, but they kill the messengers. The response from the king is overwhelming. He sends out troops and they kill the messengers and then burn down their city. At this point, the king says to his messengers “Go invite everyone, go to the hedge roads and bring in everybody.” Here they come and the party starts. And the king finds an attendee without a wedding garment and he throws him out in dark where there is *“weeping and grinding of teeth.”*

I said this parable is odd and strange. What are we meant to conclude here? That God is some sort of tyrant who overreacts, invites people to a party and when they say ‘no’, he kills them and burns down their city?

What is happening here? Is God having mood swings? He is happy some days and not so happy other days? Does this not contradict one of the famous lines of Scripture that says God does not change? *“God is same yesterday today and forever.”*

How do we understand this parable?

One of the famous writers Flannery O' Connor says "In the Land of the Deaf we have to shout." What she means is that in our *hyper-secularized world* a lot of people have grown deaf to spiritual themes. They need to be awakened.

How do you awaken people? By telling an over-the-top exaggerated story meant to get their attention. This is what today's parable is. It is Jesus using exaggerated language to emphasize a spiritual truth. This story should not be read literally as an allegory where we say just as the king behaved, that is how God behaves.

Details of story

A king is giving a wedding banquet for his son. In Jesus' time it would be unimaginable to receive a more high-level invitation than for a king giving a wedding banquet for his son. It would be like the Bishop inviting me to dinner at his residence and I would say, "Bishop, I cannot come. I am busy. I am going to watch a movie with my friends."

This again is the story of Israel. **God personally invited Israel** to the wedding banquet of His Son. Who is the Son? Jesus Christ; into communion with Him. Israel rejected the prophets who were sent to them. Then Jesus Himself was killed.

The King asked his messengers to go out and invite everyone. We are the **New Israel** to whom God offers His grace; He died for all of us. St. Paul is referred to as Apostle to the Gentiles who went to the World to preach the Gospel of Jesus.

God is an inviting God.

Liturgy of the Word

God has invited us through His word proclaimed to us each time we come to Mass.

Eucharist

We are invited to partake of the One Bread and One Chalice. Our bodies need physical food; our souls need spiritual food. Are you staying away from the Eucharist deliberately?

Example of the Saints

Read the lives of the Saints. I can relate with them because they were real human beings who went through some of things I, too, experience. And they overcame. How are you going to respond to God's invitation?

Wedding Garment

When you were invited to a wedding, you wore the proper garment. If you did not, it was very insulting to the person who invited you. God has invited us to His banquet and expects you to clothe yourself with the proper garment. Garments of Love, Charity, Compassion, Kindness, Forgiveness, Unity not Division, Garments of Peace.

Bishop Robert Barron The Parable of the Wedding Banquet. October 24, 2014