

Fr. Curtis Miller October 10-11, 2020 Homily for the 28th Sun. in Ordinary Time

Today, there are two different topics that I would like to cover: today's readings about God's invitations to us, and someone on the path to sainthood. So this will be two shorter homilies, back-to-back.

First, in today's Gospel, we hear a peculiar parable about a wedding feast. A king invites many people, who strangely refuse to attend, so he instead invites anyone off the street. Yet when he sees one of the guests not properly dressed, the king throws him out. What's going on in this story? Like last week, Jesus is telling this parable to the chief priests early in Holy Week, just days before He will be arrested and crucified. Thus, this parable is a warning to them to not reject God's invitation to accept Him as the Messiah. Jesus often refers to Himself as the Bridegroom, and He calls Heaven a wedding banquet, at which He will metaphorically marry the Church, we who are faithful to Him. This is a celebration of great joy that God wants to share with us. However, no one can be forced to attend. We are free to accept or reject God's invitation to faith.

And what about the guest who isn't wearing a wedding garment? This means not being properly prepared to join God's celebration. It's not about physical clothing, but rather about living a holy life. At our baptism, whether we were brought into the Church as infants or came in as adults, we were dressed in white. The priest or deacon would have reminded us that this white garment is a symbol of the holiness that we are to preserve throughout our lives. None of us is able to keep ourselves perfectly unstained, but the good news is that God offers us the forgiveness we need to be made clean. As the Book of Revelation tells us, the people who go to Heaven have "washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb." Obviously, blood can't clean fabric or cloth, but this is referring to the Blood of Jesus, shed for us on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

One of the best ways for us to get ready to participate in the heavenly wedding feast is to come to the Mass, the foretaste that God gives us of that eternal wedding banquet. When God invites us, let us accept His invitation. And let us dress ourselves in our best wedding garment by living holy lives as best as we can, and by repenting of any of our sins. In that way, we will be preparing ourselves for life in Heaven.

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At the end of this month, a priest who served in Connecticut 140 years ago will be beatified, bringing him one step closer to sainthood. His name was Father Michael J. McGivney, and though he only served as a priest for about twelve years, dying at the early age of thirty-eight, his name is known throughout the world because he founded the Knights of Columbus. Seeing as this is Columbus Day weekend, just before his beatification, it seemed like a good opportunity for us to get to know Father McGivney a little better.

He was born in 1852, the son of Irish immigrants and the eldest of thirteen children. The McGivney family was very faithful, but it was hard to make ends meet. Young Michael had to leave school at thirteen to work in a factory to help support his family. Yet he felt called to something else: giving his life in service to God. And so he entered seminary in Quebec and later New York. However, the death of his father required McGivney to return home and work to support his mother and siblings. Finally able to complete his seminary studies in Maryland, he was ordained a priest in 1877.

Similar to his own experience, the young priest saw that many immigrant families also suffered from the death of a father. This forced many families to split up or suffer terrible poverty. He also noticed that many of the working men in his parish had few opportunities for socialization with others. Many simply spent their wages in the pubs and taverns, leaving nothing for their families. Finally, he also noticed the prejudice against Catholic immigrants, and the suspicion that they could never be real Americans.

Observing all these problems, Father McGivney came up with the idea for the Knights of Columbus, and he invited the men of his parish to join. It gave the men a chance for wholesome fellowship, to support each other's faith, to band together to help families in crisis, and to respond to prejudices against them by performing acts of service for the broader community. And though Father McGivney died very young, the Knights of Columbus have carried on his legacy of faithful service, growing to include over two million members around the world, including here in our parish. The problems faced by society have changed over the years, but the Knights continue to respond to these problems by living out their faith through acts of service. We would do well to imitate their example.