

Last year, I did a wedding in Malaysia, a good friend, family, friends. It was a great wedding feast. At the wedding reception, I know we had a great time and people began to dance to some, you know, Indian town, Bollywood music. So I just started dancing. But I think to some of the people who were culturally kind of conservative could not accept that the priest was dancing. And I could go back then to the wedding ceremony itself, where the sacristan in the church, in Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, came and told me, "you know, father, the people should not cross this point in the sanctuary. They should not step on this place and they should not do this". There is too many rules I couldn't keep up. So instead of upsetting the man by bringing people up, I decided to go down.

What is a wedding feast?

Have you ever thought of what is involved in a wedding feast? It's basically free food, good food and drink, good drink, possibly, and loads and loads of fun. You're not spending, somebody else is spending and you are celebrating there. There is an atmosphere of joy being created. Unbounded joy, sometimes silly joy. So leave everything aside and outside possibly and spend that time in complete joy. So, a wedding feast is somebody spending so that you can have a good time. You are happy because you are invited and, you have fun. Sometimes I feel for the people who when they pick up their phones and walk out and, you know, talk to somebody. I would say, please, don't insult the host, this guy, or this family. They spend a lot of money and a lot of efforts to make this feast happen. Don't insult them. Don't walk out. All in all a wedding reception, a wedding feast, is a happy place to be. Now, if Jesus is telling us that the kingdom of God is like a wedding feast, there's so much truth in it.

God in his generous love has given us his Son. He has given us our lives. He has given us the nature, this world to share. In the Eucharist, God has given his Son as the food and the drink. So, at the Eucharist, we take a cup, sip from the cup and break the bread and share. So, if our church's or our family gatherings at the Eucharist, do not reflect that joy, there is something seriously wrong in the way we understand God or understand our religion. Sometimes when I look at people, especially in my context, you know, some of the people from the, I know from that particular Pentecostal movement, they would say, don't be happy. Just wear plain white clothing, no jewels, no smile. And that's how they think God wants them to be. Wrong. God wants us to be happy. Otherwise, why would he even risk sending his son so that we may have life and life to the fullness?

So, our joy is not a, not an unreasonable joy. It's a real joy. That does not mean we do not have problems, sufferings, issues with our relationship, pain, diseases, struggles, loss of job. Does that mean we did not have any problem? No. We do. That's part of our human existence. But despite all of this, we choose to remain happy because we are kingdom people, we choose to remain happy because somebody is throwing a party so that we can be happy. So, spend your life in grateful joy that God has invited us to be part of a huge wedding party.

So, how do you enjoy this? How do you understand and make it your own? To begin with open your eyes, to the wonders that surround you, to the wonders that are around you. The gifts from the father who loves us so generously, who is madly in love with you and me. So, take it easy. Take a pleasant walk, listen to some beautiful music, take a good book and read, spend some time and waste time with a friend, have some, enjoy some good food and drink.

Now that first reading, it's a fantastic reading. If you really want to know what God is like, what the kingdom of God is like, go to that first reading again It's a reading that tells us that God is preparing the biggest feast ever so that we may have a good time. On this mountain he will remove the morning veil covering all peoples. Now, how eerily relevant is that? That's our hope. The morning veil that is on all of us, including the mask, will be removed, and the shroud enwrapping all nations. And he will destroy

death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek and what will he give us instead. The Lord will prepare a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines.

Now we might as well get used to it now because Jesus is telling us the kingdom of God here after also will be an eternal party. But if you do not know how to party here, how to be in communion with the Lord in joy, in gratitude, then you might have a problem there. So, get used to it now each day, set aside a little bit of time, maybe 10 minutes in a comfortable, calm, quiet place and commune with Jesus. Talk to Jesus, tell him a joke. Maybe sometimes even loudly and laugh out loud.

You can be even silly and foolish, but tell him a joke. Get used to the joy of Christ and his presence. The joy we receive as Christians is real. And if we are not a joyful people, if you as a Christian do not reflect the joy of Christ, then there is something seriously wrong with our Christian faith.

I would like to end this joyful, beautiful scripture with a small joke. I think I have told this joke before, but it is worth repeating.

A preacher who happened to come for a mission preaching wanted to tell everybody that it is Lent and you need to prepare yourself. So, he says, if I have all the beer in the world, I will throw it into the river. If I have all the wine in the world, I will throw it into the river for this Lent. And if I have all the whiskey in the world, I will throw everything into the river, this Lent. And with that, he sat down and the song leader quite cautiously stood up and with a smile on his face said for our final hymn, let us sing hymn Number 65, ***"Shall we gather at the river"***.