

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OT-A

I don't know about you, but I have gone to a fair number of weddings over the past forty years.

Customs have certainly changed along with hairstyles and the choice of the clothes people wear.

Being invited to a wedding is usually considered an honor.

But in this Sunday's parable those who were invited first made excuses and did not come; some even killed the servants of the king.

Jesus is speaking about his ministry and that fact that the leaders of the people did not accept him and would eventually put him to death.

However, their rejection of Jesus became the catalyst for the extension of the invitation to the Gentiles and all who were considered "outsiders."

We sang about this in our Gathering Hymn: "Gather us in the lost and forsaken ... gather us in the proud and the strong."

Another song we often sing declares: "O come and sit at my table where saints and sinners are friends."

We are all sinners, yet we are all invited.

But the invitation carries with it the expectation that we acknowledge our need for ongoing conversion.

This is the meaning behind the man in the parable who arrives at the feast not dressed in a wedding garment.

Proper attire was considered in Middle Eastern culture to be a symbol of respect for one's host.

The man's lack of attention to this expectation suggests that he did not care enough to prepare to participate in the feast.

You and I received our wedding garment when we were baptized and were clothed in Christ.

We were told: "See in the white garment you wear the outward sign of your Christian dignity. Bring that dignity unstained to the wedding feast of heaven."

For the past several months we have listened to Jesus teaching us what this means for us as disciples in the Kingdom of God.

Through his parables as well as by his actions Jesus has challenged us to:

- To be bold in our witness to Christ;
- To carry our cross each day;
- To tend the garden of our soul;
- To care for the little and the least;
- To be willing to see God's grace and patience at work in the lives of those we least expect;
- To give all we have for the treasure of the Kingdom;
- To not be too proud to cry out, "Lord, save me;"
- To make choices from the perspective of eternal life;
- To be merciful towards others as God has been merciful towards us;

- To not judge others regarding their relationship with God;
- To accept that God's ways are not our ways;
- And to work faithfully in the vineyard, rendering to God the fruit of our labor.

St. Paul declares: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

Whenever we might feel overwhelmed by the demands of discipleship we need to remember these words.

Without the strength that comes from the Father, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit ... you and I are unable to live up to the challenge of the Gospel.

But if remain united to Christ, God will bring us to that holy mountain, with its rich feast of eternal life.

The Eucharist is a foretaste of that feast, nourishment for the journey ...

... and a real participation now in Christ's banquet of love where, indeed, "saints and sinners are friends."