

Trinity XX

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[0 : 00] And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said, The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son.

Worship this morning's holy gospel in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. It is such a privilege to be here at Mass this morning, isn't it?

Being here at Mass to receive the grace given in the Holy Eucharist is one of God's greatest blessings to his church.

But as we heard in the gospel lesson, not everyone is given this privilege. When the servants of the king went out into the highways to invite wedding guests, a man came into the banquet hall without a wedding garment on and was cast out.

That wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ. We must be clothed with Christ's righteousness to dine at the wedding supper of the Lamb. How are we clothed in Christ's righteousness?

[1 : 12] By holy baptism. Galatians 3.27 states, For as many as you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

In baptism we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and we must have his righteousness upon us to be able to dine here at his holy table.

Now historically our church's practices required confirmation, or the readiness and desire to be confirmed before receiving the Eucharist.

I understand the historic reasons for this, but I think we should consider the practices of the Orthodox and Roman churches, both which recognize that baptism only, that baptism only is the prerequisite that scripture gives for receiving the Eucharist, and then adjust our practices accordingly.

But that's just one priest's opinion. By baptism we have been clothed in Christ's righteousness, which we have confirmed with the declaration of personal faith in confirmation.

[2 : 18] This being so, each of us has a standing invitation from the Father to attend the wedding supper of his Son, our Lord Jesus, every time it is offered.

What do we do with this invitation? As we are told in the Gospel lesson, a number of those invited were not willing to come. They ignored the gracious invitation they had been given and went about their own business.

They made light of it, the scripture says, as if it was no big deal, not a privilege at all. Many today think the same way.

I think this is primarily because consciously or subconsciously, they don't recognize that Jesus is really present in the consecrated species of bread and wine.

They think it's just common blessed bread and a common blessed cup. They think it's a mere memorial or the presence is merely spiritual, meaning non-real.

[3 : 27] But none of that is biblical. It is not the Catholic faith. Jesus, the second person of the eternal Holy Trinity, the one who spoke the world into being, the word made flesh who dwelt among us.

He is the one who spoke the words. This is my body. This is my blood.

Do his words not affect what they declare? Well, of course they do. 1 Corinthians 10, 16 states, the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, meaning the partaking of the blood of Christ, the bread which we break, is it not the communion, the partaking of the blood of Christ, or the body of Christ, excuse me?

The body and blood of Jesus become really present for us in a mysterious way not explained to us by God in Scripture and best left alone by the church to not try to explain it.

When the very words of Jesus are spoke by a bishop or priest in apostolic succession over the bread and wine set apart by Jesus' command.

[4 : 49] And you and I are invited to commune with him and to partake of him, of his body and his blood made really present each time mass is celebrated.

What do we think about God's invitation? How important is it to us? Do we make light of it? Do we think, no big deal?

Do we think, well, there'll be mass again next Sunday. It can wait. I'll go then. This Sunday I have this to do or I have that to do and this or that is more important.

Now, of course, there are times when we truly cannot get to mass. We may be sick. We may be injured with COVID and flu and everything. We may be feeling some symptoms and we say, you know, it's probably safer for me to stay home.

We may have to work. We may be out of town and there isn't a proper parish nearby. There can also be other circumstances too when we are truly prevented from being at mass.

[6 : 00] God understands this. They aren't the problem. It's those other times and those other reasons, those this or that reasons, the ones which make light of the invitation.

Those are the problem. And often they are allowed to be the reason for not being at mass.

A number of years ago, I heard a talk given by a Roman Catholic priest where he recalled a conversation he had with a Presbyterian minister.

The minister said, Reverend, of course, he would not call the priest's father. If I believe what you do about the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, I'd be flat on my face before it.

And you'd have to pull me away. That minister recognized something that many of us as Anglo-Catholics do not. And we actually do believe Jesus is really present in the Eucharist.

[7 : 08] And what he said is a bit extreme. Jesus doesn't expect us to stay here. In fact, he told us to go, go into all of the world. But he does expect us to accept his invitation to come and worship and to feed upon him.

And as the gospel text shows, he doesn't just overlook reasons that make light of his invitation. He expects us to understand the privilege we have and then be here.

Jesus ends this parable by saying, many are called, but few are chosen. These are very pointed words. They are honest truth. The father calls many to the marriage feast.

We see this in the parable. How many? All who have been baptized. And that's a lot of people. And yet while many are called, few are chosen.

The father respects the gift of free will he has given to each of us. Each of us has the choice, the real choice, to choose to accept his gracious invitation or refuse it.

[8 : 27] And a lot of people do refuse it. In fact, more all the time, refuse. Many choose to not come to the marriage feast.

Others go even further and choose to reject the grace of baptism or reject receiving baptism altogether. Let us be among the chosen few.

Let us both accept the grace of baptism we have been blessed with and the invitation we have to be here at the marriage feast. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 6 states, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise and the glory of his grace, by which he made us accepted in the beloved.

What St. Paul is saying here, my brothers and sisters, is that we are to live as those who have been chosen in Christ, who have been brought into his church. We are in Christ.

This is where our life now is lived, in Christ. And in order to live in Christ, we need to be fed by Christ. And we are fed by Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

[10 : 13] As today's epistle, Ephesians 5, 17 states it, Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. The Lord's will is for us to accept the invitation to the marriage supper of his son.

His will, unless really prevented, is for us to be here at Mass. Let us not make light of the invitation, and let us never refuse it.

Yes, it really is a privilege to be here at Mass this morning. Isn't it? After hearing the gospel lesson, hopefully we see this more now than we did when we walked into the nave this morning.

Our Father in heaven is called and chosen us in Christ. Our Lord Jesus is really present in the host and the wine. Our bodies and souls are truly fed with the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation.

How could we refuse so wonderful an invitation? In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

[11 : 25] Amen. Amen. Amen.