

Homily for 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

October 14-15, 2017

Centred in Joy

When I was in Spain two weeks ago, on our last night in Santiago de Compostella, the hotel where we stayed hosted a wedding banquet. What a banquet it was. I estimated there must've been 400 guests all assembled in this magnificent hall. Our group of pilgrims were having Mass in a nearby chapel and the hallway we went down to get to the chapel, bypassed the wedding hall. As we prayed Mass we could hear the singing and jocular sounds coming from the nearby newlyweds and guests.

As I read this week's readings from Isaiah and Matthew this memory was at the forefront of my mind.

The Incarnation of the Saviour is best described as a wedding banquet.

Many centuries ago Pope Gregory the Great expressed it this way:

The Father made a marriage feast for his Son by joining the church to him through the mystery of his incarnation. The womb of the Virgin who bore him was the bridal chamber of this bridegroom, and so the psalmist says, "He has set his tent in the sun, and he is like a bridegroom coming forth from his bridal chamber." He truly came forth like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber who, as God incarnate, left the inviolate womb of the Virgin to unite the church to himself.

This marriage feast is a banquet that Jesus says some refuse to attend and others are there under false pretenses. Some were so against the banquet occurring that they chose to kill the messengers of the Father hosting the celebration. But for others, the wedding banquet of the Son of God is a cause for great joy. This is a joy best captured in this life by the superlative party of them all, a wedding feast!

And so today I want to think about how we can grow in living a joy-filled life as we journey through this world to that day when we will participate in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19 this way:

***7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;***

The Book of Revelation makes explicit that this life is our preparation for that banquet. For we are Jesus' bride. So how do we make ourselves ready for the wedding day that will happen when the Father announces:

“It is time”? The Banquet is to begin”

While it is true that the ultimate banquet is still in the future, Jesus’ parable read today affirms that even now we can share in a life of nuptial joy.

We do this as we choose to centre our lives on Jesus, order them according to Jesus, and yearn for that day when we will enter into the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Three words for your consideration:

- Jesus
- Order
- Yearn

spelling the word “joy”.

Now it is a given that not everyone lives their lives centred on Christ. There are so many different ways a person can choose to orientate their lives. But for the Christian, we with St. Paul affirm that we can “do all things through Christ who strengthens us”. Think about this preposition “through” by considering the following illustration.

If you drive from Spain to Southern France there is a mountain range dividing the countries. In order to get from one country to the other, engineers constructed a tunnel through the Pyrenes that is seven kilometres long. Without that tunnel there would be no way to get from Spain to France. You have to go through the tunnel.

To live through Christ is to understand that our faith in him is the tunnel by which we journey through this world to heaven. Paul says that as he lived a life centred in Jesus he had learned the secret of contentment.

Think with me about this word.... People who are content are learning to view the content of their lives as the means to deepening trust and dependency on Christ. Paul said that his contentment was not dependent on his circumstances but rather on seeing Jesus present in and through everything he experienced in life.

As we live in this world we have to proceed along the road of the present age which can be a very rough ride at times. Paul knew this. In the world good and evil, true motives and false motives, love and hate, peace and war, fidelity and infidelity are always held in tension. The separation will only come when we have reach our goal.

Only the holy will be in heaven, and only the evil will be in hell. This life is situated between heaven and hell.

This is the point of Jesus’ parable where we are called to consider the right ordering of our priorities. If we don’t take this seriously the consequences will be devastating. Jesus speaks of

those who on murdering the Father's messengers reaped a fate worse than the one they meted out on those with the invitations. They would be killed and their town destroyed.

As an aside, Jesus used this graphic story to anticipate the terrible events of AD 66-70, when the Roman army came into Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and leveled the city. The people did not discover how in Jesus was the way of peace. Instead they became more zealous and revolutionary and Rome said, enough is enough and Jerusalem was destroyed.

Then there is the one whose an imposter and ill-clad, who in the end is cast out of the wedding hall to that place where there is weeping a gnashing of teeth. How we order our lives has eternal dividends for good and ill.

As is always the case there are those who are disinterested in Jesus, represented by the one tending to his field and his business. There are those who actively oppose Jesus by violence and eradicate his messengers. There are those who are at the wedding banquet under false pretenses. These are the ones in the Church who although seemingly supportive of the bridegroom and his mission actually oppose the purposes of Jesus and the Church.

From the time of Jesus' first coming to his Second Coming there will always be indifference to Jesus, aggression against Jesus and duplicity of motive by some who are in the Church of Jesus.

Then there will be those who in the words of today's Gospel acclamation are open to the Father's enlightening of the eyes of their hearts so that they can order their lives with Jesus at the centre.

When we are living through Jesus and are so ordering our lives concentrating on him, we discover something else. There is a yearning in our souls that longs to be with Christ. There is a yearning in our souls that understands that the banquet described in Isaiah is still in the future. But we also know that every time we have experienced something of the poetical language of Isaiah in the present, like going to a wedding banquet, we desire that which still awaits us in the future.

For we look forward to that day when the supper of Revelation 19 we be announced. What will that meal be like?

***On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.***

**7 And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;**

8 he will swallow up death forever.

**Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,**

**for the LORD has spoken.
9 It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.**

This is what we yearn for. This is what we are waiting for.

Jesus left the wedding chamber of the Blessed Virgin Mary to come to into this world, so he could issue personally the invitation to the Banquet the Father will be throwing for him.

So, let's take to heart the invitation and live through Jesus, ordered towards Jesus and yearning for Jesus each day we are given life in this world. In this way we can know the joy of those who have been issued invitations to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!