

Homily for September 6, 2019

In today's Gospel people ask Jesus why he doesn't encourage fasting among his followers. Jesus' answer is wonderful: "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" (That's a typically Jewish style, by the way, answering a question with another question.)

This great image of the wedding feast comes up frequently in the New Testament, most obviously in the wedding feast at Cana narrative. And it is echoed in the tradition. Jesus is the wedding of heaven and earth, the marriage of divinity and humanity; he is the bridegroom and the Church is the bride. In him, the most intimate union is achieved between God and the world.

Could you imagine people fasting at a wedding banquet? Could you imagine going into an elegant room with your fellow guests and being served bread and water? It would be ridiculous! The mark of the Christian dispensation is joy. Exuberance. Delight.¹

How different this is from the impression some people have of Christianity. This impression may in result from those who as Jesus followers live the faith without the heartfelt exuberance that Jesus invites us to embody. We have to be careful that the parable of today's Gospel does not apply to us. New Wine needs to be placed in new wine skins because the fermentation process that ages the wine needs to be in skins that were flexible. There was a rigidity and hardness to the old skins that would result in the new wine bursting the old skins. Similarly, a new piece of cloth which is supple would tear away from a crusty hard old garment with no give and take.

To be in Christ, is to be in the words of our Collect to be always standing in the bright light of truth rather than being wrapped in the darkness of error. What does living in this truth look like? It infuses language with a sense of wonder as is expressed in Paul's words for Colossians:

Listen to how this is the language of new cloth, new wine; the wedding banquet.

Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation... all things have been created through him and for him... He is the first born from the dead, so that he may come to have first place in everything... For in Christ the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

This is wedding theology where the Apostle in a cascade of acclamations wants us to see the splendor of the bridegroom Jesus and for us to realize we are his bride.

For you see Catholicism is not just some old wine placed in a tired old wine skin. No Catholicism when fully appropriated calls us to be that new wine skin able to accommodate the fermenting Good News of the Gospel. How liberating it is for us when we discover our place at the wedding table, where we feed on His Eucharistic body. For with David the King we can sing in the celebratory language of psalm 100:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness... For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever.

¹ Bishop Barron Daily Gospel Reading at <https://wm-so.glb.shawcable.net/zimbra/mail#1>

With this perspective imprinted on our hearts and minds we can indeed enter the court of the Lord, that is this sanctuary, with praise as we give him thanks and bless his name.

