

Commentary to the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wearing our Christianity



This is not a good Sunday for you if you are on a diet. The first reading talks about the banquet of the Lord, where there will be juicy, rich food. Heaven will be pastry without cholesterol. The gospel talks about the wedding banquet that a king prepares for his son, only to have the invited refuse to come and even mistreat his servants.

The King then invites strangers to the meal, who have a whopping great time. Then, in what really is a second parable added on, the king spots a man without the proper wedding garment. He gets really upset and throws the man out where there will be a weeping and gnashing of teeth. Perhaps you might wonder, as I know I have, "Why is the Host so upset over this man's clothes?" After all, this is a traveler or a vagrant, how can he be expected to have a fine wedding garment? That would be missing the point for the sake of the detail, something we always have to be careful of regarding scripture.

This parable is not about wearing clothes. It is about wearing Jesus Christ. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," St. Paul tells the Romans, and the Galatians, and the Colossians, and the Ephesians and us. The man who came without the proper clothes is the Christian in name only, who refuses to put on Jesus Christ throughout his life. This is the person who accepts the invitation of the Lord, but refuses to exercise his or her responsibility in the Christian community.

We are invited to share the intimacy of the Banquet of Heaven. We are invited into God's presence. God does not ask a lot from us to be with him. But he does expect us to wear our Christianity. The way we respond to his love must be evident to the world. People should know that we are Christians by the way we live our lives. Sometimes we priests joke that our lives would be much easier if it weren't for the people. Truthfully, it is serving the Lord through the people and being a witness to their Christianity that makes our priesthood wonderful. One of the most edifying aspects of being a priest is my continual exposure to the active Christianity so many embrace. People will call me to tell me about sick or hurting parishioners. I'll go to the homes of the elderly and find others there cheerfully caring for them. Parishioners are always mentioning to Fr. Justin, Fr. Kevin, or me that someone needs our help.

People are always asking us if there are any particular families they can sponsor not only at Thanksgiving and Christmas, but also throughout the year. We have several families in our parish that have adopted a child about to be institutionalized. And anytime there has been any sort of crisis in one of our families, people have always come forward to offer to take care of the children, cook for the family, etc. I also know that there is a wide range of people in this parish that I merely have to say "we need a special favor" and they will gladly help out. As Christians we have to recognize that none of this should be exceptional.

We can't just say we are Christians. We have to live our Christianity. Living our Christianity may not always be public, but, and this sounds like a contradiction but isn't, living our Christianity is always evident, even when not public. For example, a senior citizen may be very generous to someone and no one, not even the recipient of the generosity, knows who is providing for the person. However, that senior citizen's life, his or her concern, his or her conversation, is not self centered but shows a concern for others. All of us want to be happy. Jesus came to bring happiness to the world. We can be happy if we follow the Lord.

He gave us the ideal and example by giving himself for us. We are all our happiest when we are able to give to others. If we want to be happy, we have to follow the Lord. If we want to whoop it up at the wedding banquet of the King, we need to wear our wedding garment. Today we pray for the determination, perseverance and courage to be an active in our Christianity.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino, SJ