

## 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 2020 A

After a weekday morning Mass a few years ago, I was rushing to a meeting somewhere and passed a gentleman in the gathering space who was obviously checking out the parish. He was reading the flyers, looking at the bulletin, and I imagine he was genuinely searching for a home for his Catholic faith-life. Compelled by a tight schedule, I muttered a “good morning” as I zoomed by ... the original zoom, not the online one ... and was out the door. I would not recognize him again. While I have no recollection of what seemed so important that morning, I do vividly remember my failure of simple hospitality, a missed opportunity to offer just a moment of kindness. *If you are out there, sir: I am sorry for my haste.*

This simple Gospel story of the wedding invitation has many layers. It is about salvation history – God choosing a people for the Covenant promises, and how their rebellion and refusals were frustrating their fulfillment. It is about the Eucharist, the feast of eternal life, and how sometimes other things just seem more pressing than being here or rob our joy even when present. And it is about our everyday choices, whether we are willing to be disrupted by God’s call and diverted from our own concerns and schedules to encounter joy and hope with Jesus and those He chooses to be in our lives.

Elsewhere in the Gospel, Jesus says: “At an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” Of course that refers to the return of the Lord at the end of history. But it is also true in our day-to-day encounters with those made in God’s image. Jesus comes among us in the members of His Body, and sometimes they wear what Mother Teresa called His “distressing disguise” in the persons of those who are sick or poor or troubled, the unborn and the aged, the stranger we can pass by or the friend we can take for granted.

Many are called, few are chosen, the passage ends ... which might make it sound as though God is excessively picky, and the offer of salvation is narrowly restricted. The detail about the man pulled off the

street and then thrown out because he doesn't have a wedding garment reinforces this impression. It seems an unreasonable demand, *unless we know, as Jesus's hearers would have, that there would have been a table of appropriate clothing available at the door.* All he would have had to do was put it on, according to the custom; and he had no real reason for why he did not. When Jesus says, "few are chosen," the Greek original can also be translated as "few are set apart, few are separated" – in other words, *few are able to separate themselves from their own interests and convenience to enter the joy God prepares.* The parable is not about how much God demands of us, but how much He offers us ... if we can separate ourselves from what seems so pressing in the moment to embrace what is truly important for our eternal joy.

We come to spend this time with Jesus, hidden but truly present in the Eucharist beneath the appearances of bread and wine. *We are sent to spend time with Jesus,* hidden but also truly present in our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. This week, look for those opportunities where Jesus can interrupt your routine and maybe even become an inconvenience. It would be a grace if some gesture of service prompts a person in need to echo the words of St. Paul: "It was kind of you to share in my distress." *And when it's hard to separate ourselves from what might seem urgent so we can be present to what truly matters, remember what Paul also learned: "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me."*