

Timothy J. Grassi

28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2020

A mental hospital developed an unusual test to determine when their patients were ready to go back into the world. They would bring the patient being considered for release into a room with a sink. When the patient entered the room a faucet over the sink was already on, the sink was overflowing, and water was pouring onto the floor. The patient was handed a mop and asked to clean up the mess. If the patient had enough sense to turn off the faucet before starting to mop up the water, the doctors concluded he was ready to go back into society. But if he started mopping with the water still running, more treatment was needed. You and I need to stop mopping long enough to look up and see if the faucet is still running. I think it is important to realize that this Gospel passage is taking place in the last week of Jesus' life. It is what we know as Holy Week. So, Jesus is focusing His attention on parables describing the Kingdom of Heaven. On the past 2 Sundays we heard two of those parables and today we hear the third. This parable is similar to last weeks and when we study it we see that the king stands for God. The wedding feast stands for the Kingdom of God. The invited guests stand for the Chosen People, the Jews, who made a covenant with God. Finally, the substitute guests stand for the sinners and the Gentiles of Jesus' time. They are the people who accepted Jesus after God's Chosen People, the Jews, rejected Him. Certainly,

one of the lessons Jesus is trying to teach His people is that The Kingdom of God is now open to ALL people, Not just the Chosen People, the Jews. No one is excluded from the invitation, not even Gentiles. This would have been a revolutionary idea for the Jews of Jesus' time. So, what does this have to do with all of us; what's the personal, practical meaning for us? Well, first of all, notice that the Jews had accepted God's first invitation, but then some of them had a change of heart. The parable says one man decided to work on his farm instead. Another decided to attend to other business. These men didn't go off to get drunk, or to decide to commit a crime. They simply decided to do something else. Further, at the end of the passage, notice the one substitute guest who is expelled from the feast by the king because he came without a wedding garment. This describes a man who, if we may exaggerate slightly, showed up at the banquet in the same filthy clothes that he wore to clean out his stables, where he kept his donkeys. The problem with this is that he is responding to the king's invitation, but on his own terms, not the king's terms. He stands for someone who refused to conform to the etiquette that was normal in ancient times when people entered the king's presence. The point for us is this, we accepted Baptism and Confirmation and said "yes" to God's invitation, but that is not a one time commitment. It's an ongoing process. Saying yes to God's invitation requires constant recommitment and updating. It's so easy to get distracted by daily life and to forget about eternal

life. It's so easy to fill ourselves with the junk food of this life and forget about the banquet of eternal life. Accepting God's invitation is not a matter of saying yes once and then forgetting all about it. It's like the "I do" of marriage. It's not the end of the process, but the beginning of one. Saying "yes" to God is like graduating from college. Graduation is not the end of one's learning, but rather, the launching pad for further learning. Our commitment to God must grow also. Take Mass, for example, does it mean more to you today than it did a year ago? If not, why not? What about the Bible? Does it mean more to you today than it did a year ago? More specifically, is the Bible seen in you more today than it was a year ago? It's not a matter of how many times you've been through the Bible, but how many times the Bible has been through you. This is why the wedding garment is so significant. We are among the substitute guests who have been invited by God to the wedding feast of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have been invited by God to sit down at the banquet of eternal life with His Son, Jesus. But, if we accept His invitation, then we must do so on God's terms, not our own. That means that the wedding garment stands for the virtue that we wear. In other words, the loving concern for others, the service to our brothers and sisters, the kindness we display, the patience we show, in general, the good deeds we exercise. So, we need to go to the root of our restless, confused lives. Have we crowded God out, and without God, made our life simply a whirlwind of meaningless activity, like the 2 men in

the Gospel who became so involved in the banquet of this life that they forget about the banquet of eternal life? We need to stop mopping long enough to see if the faucet is still running? And we better make sure that we are properly dressed in a wedding garment of good deeds. We need to center our lives in Him and His purpose. In the end we will discover that Heaven is really under-rated. Instead of getting all caught up in this life and this body of ours and all the comforts that we can afford to try to create Heaven on earth, perhaps we need to concentrate our efforts on what it's going to take to get to our true home, the eternal wedding banquet as Isaiah described in our first reading where there will be "rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines... where death will be destroyed forever... where God will wipe away the tears from every face."