



Bringing Home the Word



28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME October 12, 2014

24/7 Christians

By Janel Esker

Sometimes Jesus' words can seem vague; at other times, he makes his point with extreme clarity. The latter is the case today. For the past three Sundays, Jesus has used parables to indict the religious leaders for their self-righteousness, their assumption of God's favor, and their rejection of Jesus. Today he compares them to wedding guests who decline their invitation. Some must attend to more important matters; others believe they needn't come because they're already in the host's good graces.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 25:6–10

The prophet describes the Lord's mountain as an endless banquet and a blameless, united, peaceful community. When it appears, all will see God and rejoice.

Philippians 4:12–14, 19–20

Paul declares his complete dependence on God for satisfaction and fulfillment. Whether he lives in abundance and strength or distress and need, it is to God's grace and glory.

Matthew 22:1–14

Jesus' parable compares the kingdom of God to a wedding feast to which many are invited but few choose to attend. When one arrives without a wedding garment, he is cast out.

The story doesn't end well for them, and outsiders accept the invitations. Jesus indicates the religious leaders can't slide by in the Father's eyes—salvation is guaranteed to no one, especially not to those who reject the Father's invitation.

We might too easily dismiss this story as one that doesn't apply to us. We wouldn't reject an invitation to God's banquet. Yet don't we often put other responsibilities and activities before our relationship with God? Don't we sometimes take God's love for granted? "God can't possibly expect us to live as Christians 24/7." "That little lie I told isn't so bad." "God always forgives us, right? We don't have to try that hard."

If those thoughts sound familiar, we have more in common with the invited wedding guests than we thought. Our response to God's invitation should be an ongoing, daily response rather than one given only when it's convenient. We have important responsibilities every day, but we can't accomplish any of them without God—a truth St. Paul echoed in our second reading: "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me." With these words first on our lips, we can *répondez s'il vous plaît* (RSVP) to God's invitation with a resounding "yes"—and renewed commitment and conviction. †

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Where in my life has God richly blessed me? Where has he called me to penance or sacrifice?
- What events and decisions have I been invited to participate in this week?

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful
you guide us along
safe paths. Help me
to remain close to
you and walk with
you all the days of my
life.

From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
by Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

Room for Error?

By Kathleen M. Basi

Find the word *discernment* a little intimidating. It's my responsibility as a Christian to do God's will, but figuring out what that means is not simple. Every situation brings choices. It can feel overwhelming. How can we really know God's opinion, anyway?

Some people believe discerning God's will is a matter of following the simplest path. When things fall into place, it's a sign we're doing what we're supposed to. Others take the opposite view: Any worthwhile endeavor is bound to encounter opposition. Satan's job is to derail all good and holy work. So when the going gets tough, it's a sure sign you're on the right track. There's merit in both viewpoints, but the very contradiction between them illustrates the difficulty we face in trying to determine God's will. It would be nice if the choice between right and wrong was drawn clearly: *Heaven: 26 years, exit here.*

Unfortunately, our lives are less like a limited-access highway and more like a swamp crisscrossed with countless paths—end points unknown. Trying to discern one “right” path could cripple a person were it not for this reality: In such a web of possibility, there's probably more than one way to get to heaven. As the late Fr. Richard Hogan said, “Otherwise, what is the purpose of free will?” Perhaps some paths are easier than others, but discerning wrongly will not automatically condemn a person to a



lifetime of misery.

I find that liberating. Yes, it's important to seek God's will, but no decision is so vital that there's no going back if I get it wrong. And that's good, because I'm bound to get it wrong once in a while. So, by all means, pray for guidance. Educate yourself on the options. Be still and listen. Then do the best you can. God doesn't ask for more. †

Plain Talk: Change Is Habit-Forming

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

Father, why aren't you wearing your habit? I was asked this a lot after my ordination. People saw it as a symbol. They wanted everyone to know I was someone/something different, set apart. Alphonsus' design for the Redemptorist habit mirrored the

everyday garb of the Neapolitan common man. Alphonsus wanted us to look like everyone else. That's why I don't wear my habit much. Ironic, isn't it? Even a habit—which by definition doesn't change—can change.

It's sort of like Latin, once chosen over Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic because it was the language of the common person. Though some still prefer to celebrate Mass in this language, we have largely cast it aside for the vernacular.

As much as we sometimes hate—even fear—change, it's inevitable. We establish routines and become comfortable with our environment. We fall into habits. When something unexpected happens, it can throw us for a loop. The longer something has been part of our world, the more devastating change will be.

Without change there is no growth, no dream, no advancement, no accomplishment, no life. This is especially true in the Church. For the Church to be authentic, it must be a living Church. We think of the Church as an immovable and unchanging force. But the truth is, despite appearances to the contrary, it constantly changes.

God doesn't change, but our understanding of God constantly changes and deepens. Attending Mass should be our habit, but never our routine. We must strive for newer heights in our praise. How can we express in language and gesture the abundant and everlasting life our God has given us with a faith and celebration that isn't alive? Our liturgies must be infused with life. And so I've changed my old habit in hopes of developing some new life-giving habits. †

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 13–18

Mon. Galatians 4:22–24, 26–27, 31—5:1 / Luke 11:29–32
Tue. St. Callistus I: Galatians 5:1–6 / Luke 11:37–41
Wed. St. Teresa of Jesus: Galatians 5:18–25 / Luke 11:42–46

Thu. St. Hedwig, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: Ephesians 1:1–10 / Luke 11:47–54
Fri. St. Ignatius of Antioch: Ephesians 1:11–14 / Luke 12:1–7
Sat. St. Luke: 2 Timothy 4:10–17 / Luke 10:1–9

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