

Ordinary A 28, October 11, 2026 St. Michael's parish Greenwich

About five Octobers ago, I did a wedding in Philadelphia; and that Autumn the Eagles were looking to go to the Superbowl. The wedding was an elegant affair; many of the men wore tuxedos, even if they were not in the wedding party itself.

And then, in the midst of all these beautifully togged-out people, there was a middle-aged couple; dressed in Philadelphia Eagles sweatshirts. Sweatshirts.

Had I been the father of the bride, I'd have been outraged; these yahoos were disrespecting his daughter, his family, the other guests, the Church. I would have bunged them out on their ears.

And then, suddenly---aha! That part of the parable about the man not wearing the appropriate wedding garment made sense. The invitation to the wedding is both an invitation, to feast—and a command---to clean up your act.

Jesus sets a table of abundance, and invites us to eat and drink, of his very Body and Blood.

But St. Paul reminds us, we are to eat and drink worthily.

The gift Jesus offers us is priceless. But it is not costless.

It costs Him the Cross. The cost it exacts from us is the cost of repentance, turning around, walking a new way, His Way.

The first words Jesus spoke, before the parables, before the exorcisms, before the teachings, his first words were, Repent and believe the Good News. The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent literally means, change your mind, change your way of seeing reality, change your evaluation of what is good and important and necessary. Turn away from whatever blocks God's grace and love from flowing in your life, whatever says "no" to God's invitation to the feast, to the Kingdom.

Peter Kreeft points out that everyone needs to repent because everyone is a sinner. There are only two kinds of people: unrepentant sinners and repentant sinners. (Before I Go, p 66)

And "believe this Good News" is not in the first instance a call to recite a credal formula, though we will do that shortly. In its most basic meaning, believe means "trust" and specifically trust God and trust the One Whom God has sent. Trust that God loves you and only wants the best for you. Trust that God's way, even when it is hard, (perhaps especially when it is hard) leads to truth and to life, because, as Jesus will say of Himself, "I AM the way, the truth and the life."

Indeed, the earliest Christians were called, People of the Way.

The Way of Jesus will involve in giving Himself away, in love. And He will make that visible, tangible, in a meal, as a meal.

A meal of radical hospitality.

For Jesus the banquet was never just about the food; the real point of a dinner party is to create a place of welcome for the people who share the meal, with good conversation and story-telling to accompany the good food.

His sign of welcome for outcasts was to set a place at table for them. It's God's act of radical hospitality—making space for the least, the last and the lost.

And the price of admission is the willingness to offer to other sinners the same radical hospitality.

Like the feast the father throws for the prodigal son, the meal foreshadows life in God's reign, the Supper of the Lamb.

In Jesus' parable, those first invited don't just turn down an invitation; they reject the king. They deemed their own tasks, their own agenda, to be more important than their ties and bonds to the one to whom they owed allegiance.

And in rejecting the King and his claim on them, they were rejecting their own true identity.

For Jesus, that was the pain of the parable.

He takes no delight that the first invited to the Covenant---his fellow Israelites--- have rejected God's claim on them by their repeated infidelity to the Covenant.

He anguishes that his own hearers by and large reject his invitation to repentance and faith.

Perhaps they can see the evil in the characters in the parable but can't recognize their own disobedience.

Only a few who heard Jesus really listened to him; only some allowed the parable to turn them around, to repent and believe.

When Matthew's Church hears the parable, it must confront the same challenge.

It has accepted the invitation to Covenant, accepted the grace of Christ crucified and risen. But have its members put on the wedding garments of repentance, turned away from the ways of sin and futility, been clothed in the robes of the children of the household?

Have they offered the same grace of reconciliation and welcome to others that they have received?

The alb I wear is meant to remind us that we all have been robed in the wedding garment, the robes of the children of God's own household.

The Lord calls us to repent, change our clothes as well as our minds, and turn around.

Until we leave behind selfishness and egoism, we too are still like the first ones invited---we reject the real invitation, which is not just to food, but to friendship and festival. Otherwise, we refuse our place at the banquet.

For finally the parable is not just about Israel or the early Church. It is about us.

Jesus has walked the many paths of our lives, and found all the parts of us that are unclean and alienated and lonely and marginalized; and he has invited us in.

He has prepared the meal---his own Flesh and Blood—and has prepared the guests---us, the Church.

Surely, we have answered the invitation; after all, we're here!

But have we come to eat the food, or to be the feast?

In St. Augustine's phrase, do we seek to become what we receive, the Body and Blood of Christ, broken and poured out for the salvation of the world?

Jesus, our host—pun intended—has expended the greatest of care in setting the meal—

He has laid down his life for us and poured out His Spirit upon us. He has even clothed us in the wedding garments of our baptismal robes.

Jesus invites us to offer radical hospitality, not just here at Eucharist, but in our homes, and where we work, and in soup kitchens and shelters, wherever the last, the lost and the least seek to come in from the cold.

Like Jesus, like the Church, in all those places, we want to gather the folks and tell our stories and share our meals and our lives.

And when we do, like millions of Christians before us, and millions of Christians around the world, we too will recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

And the people of God said, Amen.