

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)
10-11-2026 Homily

I. Introduction

Over 100 years ago, when steamships were the only practical way of crossing the Atlantic Ocean, all communication was done by telegraph, or wireless—and the position of wireless operator aboard a steamship was highly coveted. Once when a steamship line announced an opening for such an operator aboard one of its ships, the company's office was filled with many applicants—and all of the men were chattering among themselves so much they didn't hear a series of dots and dashes being played over a loudspeaker. A latecomer came in and sat down, but a moment later looked up in surprise and listened closely; then, with a smile, he walked right in the manager's office, not waiting his turn to be interviewed for the job. A few minutes later the manager walked out with him and announced to the other applicants, "You can all go home; I'm giving the job to this gentleman here." Some of the others complained, "But we were here before him!" to which the manager replied, "Then you should have heard the message and entered my office, just like he did." "What message?" they inquired, and the manager explained, "The message that was being broadcast in Morse Code over the loudspeaker, which said, over and over, 'The first man who hears this message and steps into the office will get the job'" (Brian Cavanagh, T.O.R., *The Sower's Seeds*, p. 36).

It was quite reasonable for a steamship company to expect that someone wanting a job as a wireless operator would be alert enough to hear a wireless message being broadcasts in Morse Code. In the same way, it's also very natural and fair that God should expect anyone wanting to enter into Heaven to be spiritually alert and ready to receive such an invitation. We are all invited into the eternal joy of God's Kingdom, and there's room for everyone there—but only we can decide whether we'll hear this good news and respond.

II. Development

As today's readings tell us, the Lord God is happy to provide for His people's needs—but He always respects our free will, and doesn't force His blessings upon us. In the words of St. Paul, "God will fully supply whatever [we] need, in accord with His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Our heavenly Father delights in blessing His children. In the 1st Reading the prophet Isaiah describes the joys of eternal life in terms of a banquet, with abundant food and drink of the highest quality, and Jesus repeats this image in His parable in the Gospel. However, He adds a very important point: due to the perversities of human nature, not everyone responds properly. Some people ignore the offer of eternal life; others violently reject it, and even some of those who show up do so without taking the opportunity seriously—as symbolized by the guest who didn't bother dressing up in a wedding garment. It is an act of eternal folly, and a grave insult to God, to act as if His offer of eternal life is unnecessary, inconvenient, or of less importance than the other routine things that occur in life—just as it was very foolish of trained wireless operators to be so caught up in their own mundane conversations and small talk that they didn't take the time to listen to a very important message that had the capacity to change their lives.

III. Conclusion

As a pastor, I don't encounter too many people symbolized by the evil persons invited to the wedding feast—those who mistreated and killed the king's messengers and servants. Wicked people like that—unless they're sincerely repenting—usually don't come to church, seek out priests, or speak to them either in public or privately. However, I do regularly encounter persons symbolized by the guest without a proper garment. This once happened quite literally in another parish. At the wedding rehearsal, I met the bride's Uncle Fred, who was going to be videotaping the wedding, and I showed him where he could set up his tripod in a visible and convenient corner of the sanctuary. He was neatly dressed, with a nice shirt and slacks, and that was respectful attire for church. At the wedding itself the next day, however, he showed up wearing dress slacks, shoes and socks, and a white undershirt—and nothing more. He was actually more neatly dressed for the rehearsal than for the wedding itself, and throughout the ceremony he was right up there in front of everyone. I didn't say anything to him, but I certainly thought that was strange.

It's certainly not the end of the world if someone shows up at a wedding ceremony in church inappropriately dressed, and maybe everyone in the family merely considered him a little eccentric: "Oh, that's just Uncle Fred; he's always marched to the beat of a different drummer." The symbolic or underlying message of Our Lord's parable, however, is a much more serious matter. Taking our faith and our religious duties casually, and complacently assuming we'll still get into Heaven with no problems, is a very foolish gamble. One time a mother was trying to decide whether to enroll her eight-year-old son into the children's catechumenate, so that he could be baptized and receive First Communion, but she decided not to because the family's schedule was so busy with sports and other activities. I thought to myself, "Lady, you just don't get it—Jesus Christ is offering your son the gift of eternal life and everlasting joy, and your response to Him is, 'No, I don't think so.' Don't you realize you'll be held accountable by God for your failure to provide a religious education for your boy? What possible excuse will you be able to make?" I was polite and didn't actually say this to her, but maybe I should have—and I probably will the next time this happens.

We have lots of registered parishioners who at most come to Mass once or twice a year; we also have quite a few who could contribute to the financial support of the parish, but give little or nothing. There are many whose schedules would allow them to volunteer occasionally here or elsewhere in the local community, but never bother doing so. As a pastor, I have to warn and intercede and pray for such parishioners, even as I also thank and encourage all of you who *are* coming to Mass, who *are* contributing to the parish, and who *are* taking your faith seriously. Jesus is pleased with you—but He also warns us not to become complacent.

More than ever before in history, the world is capable of distracting and confusing and enticing us; if we wanted to fill our days with worldly concerns and pleasurable but unimportant diversions, it would be very easy to do so. The devil usually doesn't tempt good people like us to do obviously bad or evil things, but instead he tries to get us to become caught up in morally neutral things that turn our attention away from God and thereby gradually weaken our faith. We must persevere in humility and faith, always clearly remembering that the Kingdom of Heaven is our ultimate goal—a glorious life offered to everyone, but not automatically guaranteed to anyone. Jesus has issued His invitation, and our eternal happiness depends on making a genuine and wholehearted response.