

Homily, 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time "A"
SS Peter and Paul Cathedral
October 8 - 9, 2011
Rev. Noah J. Casey

Can you remember your first dance party? Maybe it was an eighth grade party. Perhaps it was a birthday party at the home of a classmate. You were glad to get the invitation, to be included. No one likes to be excluded. And yet, you may have had some doubts about your ability to dance, to speak in a group, to do all the right things so no one would think you were a weirdo. Maybe you went to the party because your folks thought it would be a good idea. You may have wanted to stay home and mess around with a new computer game, and weren't all that interested in hanging out with others in an uncomfortable situation.

Whatever the reasons, you ended up at the party. However, going to the party and participating in the party are two different things.

The evangelist Matthew, who was writing for predominantly a Jewish audience who had become followers of Jesus, spoke first to the Jewish religious establishment. But the challenging point of the parable didn't end with them. It extended to the guests who rejected the invitation, then as if that wasn't rude enough, they killed the servants sent by the king in a second attempt to get them to come to the party. The scriptures then declare clearly that the enraged king found those perpetrators and killed them.

The banquet was still waiting for participants. Everyone was invited. There were no divisions or classes. All were invited, and finally the banquet hall was filled. Now the wedding banquet could proceed.....or could it. One poor man was discovered not to be wearing the required wedding garment. When confronted about this, the Gospel tells us that he

stood there silent with no understanding. It wasn't enough for him to come to the party; he needed to become invested in the event. Wearing the wedding garment meant that he was a real participant, and was buying into the entire event. In a certain sense, we can feel sorry for this poor guy. After all it is quite possible that a few hours before this he was minding his own business, and hanging out at the crossroads when a servant of the king asked him to come to a banquet. Hey, why not? Just accepting the invitation was not enough. And just waving our baptismal certificate is not enough. We must participate.

Did you notice that not much is said about the poor bride? One writer notes that we are the bride. We're called to enter into a spiritual marriage with the Son who is no less than Jesus. Marriage doesn't happen when a license is obtained at the court house. Marriage takes place every moment of every day that spouses live their vows. Spouses cannot simply observe their marriage. They must put on the garment of commitment, and live it.

When Jesus teaches by the use of parables, He teaches us that His kingdom is not like what we know in this world. His kingdom is something different and new. It is a kingdom that seeks the participation of its members.

Let's get practical, and ask a few questions: do I own and read the Bible? Do I make use of the lectionary citations listed each week in the parish bulletin? Do I own a copy of the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH? Do I study my faith as a good steward of the gift of faith given to me by God? Do I pray each day, or just think about it? Do I merely watch the homeless and hungry who come here each day to the Cathedral Kitchen, or do I get involved in this important parish outreach by at least

praying for these brothers and sisters. Do I greet the stranger who visits our Cathedral or look away?

Let's be honest. Being a Christian is challenging. It can be messy. Sometimes the wedding garment of participation is uncomfortable. We must not only come to the banquet of life; we must get out there and dance with the Lord of the Dance taking the hands of the hesitant and unsure, and supporting one another.

Our joy wells up from the action of hands and feet eager to participate and not to be bound and thrown into the darkness. We are children of the light called to walk in the light. God has set the banquet before us today of Word and Sacrament in this very hour. Let's put on the wedding garment of eager participation and enter the feast.