

## 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

A middle-aged man died and found himself before the judgment throne. There, he was so uncomfortable, knowing that he was not good enough to be admitted into heaven. He was on the queue alongside with others who were waiting to know their fate. Jesus who was on the judgment seat said to one of those on the queue: "You can go into heaven because I was thirsty and you gave me a drink;" to another, Jesus said, go into heaven because I was hungry and you gave me food. The middle-aged man began to sweat because he could not remember any single charity he had done on earth. When he stood before the judgment throne, Christ searched his book and said, "I cannot find any good work you have done. However, I will admit you into heaven because when I was very sad you cheered me up and when I was depressed you made me laugh by the funny stories you told me."

The story of the middle-aged man says much about the power of cheerfulness. It goes to say that people who practice their Christian faith should not make gloomy faces a trademark. John Wesley said: "Sour godliness is the devil's religion." Are you one of those who think that religion is only a dry, gloomy and ascetic exercise? Then Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast will surely shock you. This parable presents God as a chief host of a banquet where he offers juicy rich food and pure choice wines. The prophet Isaiah anticipated this banquet many centuries before, as we heard on today's first reading.

God always desires the happiness of his people and so he invites them to a banquet where they will enjoy the best meals and where he will wipe away the tears from every face. He is a God so concerned about your welfare that he prepares a table for you in the sight of your foes (Psalm 23:5). St. Paul emphasizes a balanced Christian life when he says, I know how to feast and I know how to fast (Philippians 4:12).

Christians must not be dead serious always in order to be taken seriously, but Christians are called to be cheerful and joyful people. They are not to make the world a dull and boring space but they are to light up the world with joy and laughter.

This parable of the wedding goes to show that God invites everyone to a feast, but not everyone responds. Those who refuse to respond positively to God's open invitation are those who are too busy with their business. These are people who have misplaced

their scale of priority by placing their material need far over and above their spiritual needs.

Even though the wedding feast was an open invitation, there was only one requirement – everyone is to come with the prescribed dress. We notice the anger of the king in the parable when he went into the banquet, he noticed that one of the guests did not comply with the requirement for dressing and immediately, the guest was thrown out. The dress code reminds us of the symbolic white garment given at baptism, which is the outward sign of Christian dignity. The wedding garment has a deeper meaning than a physical garment. The garment in the gospel today is that which identifies a true member – character, attitude, kindness, love, goodness and mercy, etc.

The parable of the wedding banquet shows the lighter side of God who invites his people to feast from his abundance. The Holy Eucharist (Mass) is also banquet where many are invited to the table of the Lord to partake. Our happiness depends on our response to this free, open and generous invitation. Life is a celebration and it is about celebrating the goodness and providence of God. Jesus invites you to this banquet, but don't forget to put on the right garment!