



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 15, 2017

Joining God's Feast

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was growing up, Thanksgiving and Christmas were always great feasts in our house. Turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and corn were on the menu in November. The December food lineup substituted roast beef for turkey, and my father would pour a little sip of sparkling wine for each of us kids—a once-a-year treat.

My mother always made a little extra, “because,” she said, “you never know when a guest might come by.” Sure enough, in one year or another, one of us would invite someone or a neighbor would stop in. There was always plenty, and we would feast and tell stories into the night.

Those memories and the ones I make

with my own family now are as close as I can come to the banquet Isaiah and Jesus describe, and I’m sure they’re no match for that great feast in heaven.

But I think I know why Isaiah and Jesus use the metaphor. There is something sensual and earthy about gathering around a table with family and friends. It begins with the smells wafting through the house, the noise in the kitchen, the setting of the table with more than the everyday plates. We dress a little more carefully.

We are preparing for our family banquet. No matter what food is on the table, we’ll be fed with love that draws us in and accepts us simply because we are family.

Love is the gift we bring to the table, and love is the gift we receive in the act of breaking bread with one another. Our love feast needs our care and attention.

And God’s feast deserves no less. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 25:6–10a

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples.

Philippians 4:12–14, 19–20

I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.

Matthew 22:1–14

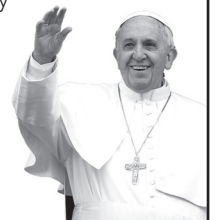
Many are invited, but few are chosen.

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A Word From Pope Francis

Man takes control of everything. He believes he is God, he believes he is king. And wars...they do not exactly help to sow the seed of life but to destroy. It is an industry of destruction. It is also a system, also of life, that when things cannot be fixed they are discarded: we discard children, we discard the old, we discard unemployed youth. This devastation has created the culture of waste....May the Lord help us and give us the grace of...hope, [and] also the grace of courage to emerge from all this destruction.

— Homily, Solemnity of All Saints, November 1, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What attitudes do I regularly bring with me to Mass?
- Is Mass about my pleasure or God’s glory?



God Invites Us to His Table Because He Loves Us

By Richard Rohr, OFM

God does not love us because we deserve it but because we need it. Does that sound startling? It shouldn't. If there is one prime idea in the Bible, it is God's undeserved love for what he has created. There is no accounting for God's love. It is not earned. There is nothing we can do to attain it or lose it. All we can do is surrender to it, trust it, and let it flow through us.

The significant difference in this world is not between those who are worthy of God's love and those who are not. (In truth, we are all unworthy to various degrees.) The significant difference is between those who know and enjoy God's love and those who do not. God does not love us because we are good. We are good because God loves us. That is a major transformation of consciousness! It moves us from life as an obstacle course to life as a banquet to be eaten and shared.

We may be uncomfortable with this truth, especially if we think in terms of a merit system where we can change God's feelings about us by doing good or evil. We cannot absorb this good news through conventional thinking, but rather the gospel must eliminate our attitudes of merit, reward, and punishment.

Before conversion, we often view God as a parent who controls, punishes, and rewards according to legitimate criteria. But God's love doesn't work that way. We

can never keep our side of the bargain, measure up, or be good enough. But that does not keep God from loving us.

Covenant of Love

This is what makes the Bible extraordinary and different from other literature. It conveys the great and central theme of grace: God's unearned favor is his steadfast, unilateral covenant of love. The merit system has been destroyed once and for all!

Human love depends upon the merits of something or someone: Is a person worthy of my love? Is he or she attractive? It's because we find something good and beautiful that we are attracted to it. That's the only way we know how to love. God's love, however, is different because the object does not determine it. It is determined by the subject, by God's self. By loving us, God is being true to God's self—not working out some arithmetic about our degree of worthiness.

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible do we see God's covenant love manifested more than in the recurring theme of the free but resented banquet. For example, in today's Gospel the king sends his servants to call everyone to a wedding feast. (Note the symbolism of loving union.) But one

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by one, the invited guests make excuses. They are not interested.

The master becomes furious and sends out his servants again, this time into the main roads to invite "whomever you find," bad and good alike. The banquet hall is finally filled—not with the "worthy" but with the willing!

God's Inclusiveness

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus invokes banquet symbolism on many occasions. Along with the little child, it seems to be his primary metaphor. He eats with sinners, invites outcasts to share a meal, does not wash his hands or the food, and allows a woman to dine at a symposium for men. He always expands the meaning of the table, even breaking social conventions to communicate the hospitality and inclusivity of God.

If we are grateful and confident in God's grace, we will spend our lives trying to give back to others what has been so graciously given to us and invite all of God's children to God's table.†



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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 16–21

Mon. Weekday:
Rom 1:1–7 / Lk 11:29–32

Tue. St. Ignatius of Antioch:
Rom 1:16–25 / Lk 11:37–41

Wed. St. Luke:
2 Tm 4:10–17b / Lk 10:1–9

Thu. Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues:
Rom 3:21–30 / Lk 11:47–54

Fri. Weekday:
Rom 4:1–8 / Lk 12:1–7

Sat. Weekday:
Rom 4:13, 16–18 / Lk 12:8–12

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