

Homily - Y28A - October 15, 2017

How rude is that? You're being awfully rude! Are you just naturally rude or have you been working at it?

Rude is an interesting word. No one likes to be called rude especially if we are not trying to be rude. Nevertheless, we are sometimes very rude to one another...often without knowing it.

Take for example today's gospel passage. We have a story that personifies rudeness. A king is throwing a wedding party. When the invited guests were told it's now time to come, they did not. Isn't that rude, especially when it's a king who invites? Then, the king sends out his servants a second time to call the guests. This time, the gospel writer tells us that the guests had, so to speak, more important things to do: go to the farm, go to one's home or business, or, in fact, some just ignored the invitation. Some of the servants were actually killed because of the message they were bringing.

Have you ever wanted to throw a party, have people say that they would come, but then, did not. Don't you feel like throttling them? I know I would. Remember that Jesus is speaking a story to illustrate a point. The point is quite simple. The king is inviting the people to a rich banquet, a banquet filled with all that we could possibly want. In the story, the king is God inviting us to his heavenly kingdom...a kingdom that will provide all that we could ever hope for.

But some people ignore the invitation, perhaps figuring that another one would come along. Some clearly state that other things are more important than the kingdom, and that's what they prefer.

We may be saying, well, I definitely want to be part of that kingdom. That's true. But, you know, that kingdom begins here on earth. It's called Church, God's people joined together in that kingdom begun here on earth that will be fulfilled in heaven. Please note, I use the word "fulfilled." In other words, if you know about the kingdom, you need to be part of it now.

So many Catholics have become very complacent with their faith. For some participation at Sunday Mass is important, but only on those Sundays when there isn't something "more important" (in quotations) to do, on those Sundays when I've had a bad week and figure, perhaps, God will come to my rescue. Religious education for children and church involvement are important, but only when it doesn't interfere with sports, or parties or trips or something else.

The erosion of participation in Church life that we have witnessed over the past 40 years replicates very well what we heard about in today's gospel. God is giving us an invitation, even weekly, to come to his feast, but so many are living in a parallel universe laden with excuses for not participating in the true banquet as were the people in today's gospel.

So, my question to you is what will you do about it. After all, you are the ones who know the missing. I don't. You may respond with something like: "I don't want to hound them because it might turn them off." God does not stop hounding us even when we turn him off....but God often needs a human voice...your voice... to extend the invitation. Give me a break. Your invitation to worship and to faith practice is an expression of your faith, and expression of your concern for them, and an expression what is truly valuable. Do the advertising executives at McDonald's say: "We had better stop advertising because we don't want to turn off our customers." No, they clearly state why we should go to McDonald's. Do you ever say to your child: "Well, I think you should stop studying. After all, I don't want you to wear out your brain."

Accepting God's invitation is not a matter of saying yes once and then forgetting all about it. It's like the "I do" of marriage. The "I do" is not the end of a process, but the beginning of one. Saying yes to God is like graduating from school. Graduation is not the end of one's learning, but the launching pad for further learning.

*Lord, help us learn
from the men in today's parable.
Help us to accept your invitation
to the banquet of eternal life.
Help us avoid making the same mistake they did.*

*Keep us from becoming
so caught up with the affairs of this life that we forget about
eternal life.*