

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 15, 2017

The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom

DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

Weddings are occasions of joy and happiness when a man and woman make a lifelong commitment of love and faithfulness before relatives and friends and before God.

Weddings are occasions where a new family unit is formed. The bride and groom enter as single individuals and leave as a married couple from whom new life will flower.

Weddings are occasions of celebration where people wear their very best. In fact, no social occasion sees people more finely dressed.

The bride carefully chooses her wedding dress and often has it especially designed just for her. The gowns for her maid of honor and bridesmaids are carefully selected and fitted as well.

The groom, his best man and ushers appear formally attired, handsome in their tuxedos, and sometimes even sporting top hats and tails.

But the members of the wedding party are not the only ones well dressed. So are the guests. For someone to appear at a wedding wearing an inappropriate outfit would be considered an insult to the bride and groom and their families.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 22:1-14), we hear about a magnificent wedding celebration given by a king for his son. When the invited guests not only fail to appear but brutally treat the servants sent to summon them to the feast, the king punishes those ungrateful guests. He then sends his servants into the city streets to bring in everyone they can find.

When the king arrives to meet the guests, he sees one "not dressed in a wedding garment." The king is furious and orders the man to be bound and thrown into the darkness.

Obviously, Jesus did not tell that parable, nor did Matthew include it in his Gospel, to give us a lesson in wedding etiquette.

The parable is about the different ways that people respond to God's invitation to be part of his heavenly kingdom that is symbolized by the wedding banquet.

When Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom, those who should have accepted his message rejected him, and so the invitation was extended beyond the Jews to the Gentiles as well.

However, as the improperly dressed man discovered, simply showing up was not enough. While the Lord invites all people to have a place in his kingdom, the Lord expects us to arrive wearing the proper clothes.

Those clothes were first presented to us at our baptism. After being washed in the waters of the font, we were dressed in the white garments of baptism and were told, "You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in these white garments that you now

wear, the outward sign of your Christian dignity....bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.”

We symbolically wear those baptismal garments by doing our best to keep the promises we made at baptism. Promises that we renew every Easter when we pledge to reject sin and evil and to live out our relationship with Christ and his Church.

The alb, the white full-length garment worn by the ordained and by many liturgical ministers, is a reminder of that baptismal garment that we are to keep unstained. So is the custom, unfortunately fading, of wearing our Sunday best to Mass. Putting on our “better clothes” can remind us of the better way of life we have promised to live as Christians.

Just as those who invite us to a wedding expect us to show up, and to show up properly dressed, so does God.

When we come to the heavenly banquet, we would not want God to say, “My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?”

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