

**Homily for the Diocesan White Mass
The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A**

October 14, 2017

**The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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Reverend Father(s), Deacons, consecrated religious, members of the healthcare profession, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good for us to be here as we gather to celebrate the annual White Mass for the Diocese of Springfield on this twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The tradition of the White Mass in the United States finds its origins in the early 1930s with the establishment of the national Catholic Medical Association. The White Mass, which is named for the color often worn by those in the medical profession, is held to offer prayerful appreciation for the dedicated work of healthcare professionals and to ask for God's blessings upon doctors, nurses, and others in the medical profession, as well as upon the patients that they treat.

There is an advice column in the State Journal-Register, the local newspaper here in Springfield, in which Jeanne Phillips responds to people

who write in for guidance on how to handle various situations in their lives. More often than not, these letters revolve around hurt feelings: people who feel that someone has slighted them or a member of their family in some way. Rarely does the person seeking advice try to see things from the other person's perspective, and the question asked of the columnist is generally "How do I make the other person change?" It seems that the people who are seeking this sort of advice have forgotten a key life lesson: that rather than trying to change others, we should look to correct our own shortcomings.

In our Gospel today, Jesus calls us to do the very thing that those who write the advice columnist seem unable to do: He calls us to see our lives from the perspective of another person; not just any person though: He calls us to look at our lives from God's perspective rather than our own. This is not an easy or simple request by any means, for in general, people seem to be first and foremost interested in what makes them happy and for others to see things from their perspective. But if we are to be true disciples of our Lord, at times we must surrender our viewpoint to that of God and change our lives so that we might open our hearts to accept the salvation that our Lord, in His great love, offers to each and every one of us.

If we look at the parable in today's Gospel through this lens, there are several points that we should take away from it to enhance our lives so that we might more fully live the stewardship and discipleship way of life in the midst of the world.

The first of these is the fact that the God invites us as Christians and disciples of His Son to a feast that is as joyous as a wedding banquet. More broadly, His invitation is an invitation to live a joyful life both in this life and then in the kingdom of Heaven. At times it may be easy to fall into the trap of viewing discipleship as a way of life that calls us to give up the many things that bring happiness and enjoyment to our daily lives. On the contrary, through living a life devoted to Christ as His disciples, our Lord invites us to a joy that the world simply cannot give.

Much like those in the parable who went about the activities of their daily lives without thinking of preparing for the wedding feast to which they were invited, too often we also go about our daily lives focusing on things that are bound by time on Earth rather than focusing on things that are not bound by time, those that pertain to our eternal happiness. In our pursuit of living as Christ's disciples here on earth, we must not listen so

closely to the demands of the world that we cannot hear the invitation of our Lord to be his disciples.

Toward the end of the parable, Jesus recounts what happened to the person who was invited to the wedding feast but came without first preparing himself and wearing a garment that was fitting for the occasion. When the king notices this he comes to the guest and asks him why he came without a wedding garment. The guest responds with silence. At this the king ordered his servants to bind the guest and cast him out into the darkness where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

This is quite a sobering end to a parable about a king who invites people to share the joy of a wedding feast. But lest we get caught up in the idea that it was about the clothes the person was wearing, we must look at this through the viewpoint of our relationship with God. If we look at the wedding feast as heaven and the king as our Lord, what is it that we can take away from this section of the parable?

The parable deals with the spiritual disposition with which we come to the banquet of the Lord. It deals with how we have prepared the “garments” that fit our heart, our mind and our soul: the garment of spiritual longing, the garment of true repentance, the garment of faith, and

the garment of reverence. These are the garments that our Lord calls us to focus on as we prepare ourselves to come to this spiritual banquet to which our Lord invites us.

Can you imagine the difference it would make if each and every one of us came to Mass truly prepared to celebrate the joyous feast that we gather each week to celebrate? I would imagine the change in our daily lives would be substantial. Not only would we be given the grace to live as Christ's disciples in the midst of the world, we would be given the grace to preach and spread the news of the Gospel to those around us, and so contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God on earth.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us always prepare ourselves spiritually for our participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. But let us not isolate that preparation simply to the moments immediately prior to Mass; rather, let us live as Christ calls us to live each and every day of our lives so that at any point we are ready to join in the joy of the Heavenly Feast so that we will not be cast out into the darkness, having forfeited the precious gifts that we had been offered, but had not accepted. The reality of this parable is that it was not the punishment of being bound and cast out that caused the wedding guest to wail and grind his teeth; it

was his realization that he had lost the ability to share in the Joy of the wedding feast.

As we participate in this Eucharistic banquet, we recognize as people of faith that the consecrated bread and wine are truly the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our presence here clearly says that we have not refused our Master's invitation, but we are indeed ready to accept the invitation of our Lord to follow Him as His disciples in this life and so share His joy for all eternity.

May God give us this grace. Amen