

## II TRINITY 2019

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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#### *1 JOHN 3.13 St. LUKE 14.16-24*



Table manners...we're all supposed to practice them...at home and in church. The key to proper table manners...humility and hospitality.

The Parable of the Great Feast is a short story Jesus tells while he is a dinner guest at the home of an important religious leader. Jesus watches other guests arrive and push each other out of the way to get better seats at the table. Jesus seizes on the opportunity to teach us something about God's hospitality and how we should respond.

In the parable a man giving a great feast and he invited many people. It would have been quite an honor to receive a dinner invitation from such an important person. Like most invitations it comes with an RSVP...we shouldn't wait to reply.

When everything was ready one man replied he just bought some real estate and wanted to check it out. Another man said he wanted to take his team of oxen on a test drive. A third man said he was on his honeymoon and hung the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.

On the surface the excuses the men gave for not coming seem reasonable. They actually aren't...they show they didn't think enough of the invitation to set aside personal plans even if they would be slightly inconvenienced. They were not grateful for the host's hospitality...and they lacked humility.

In his book *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* Father Brendan Byrne says the whole purpose of Luke's Gospel is to convey a message about God's hospitality and our tendency to find excuses for not embracing it. The Parable of the Great Feast is about God's extravagant hospitality available to us now and the invitation he sends out to everyone to join him and "sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Let's ask ourselves...do we recognize and respond to God's extravagant hospitality in our daily lives? Do we appreciate Jesus' selfless sacrifice of love enough to **NOT** make excuses for our failures and to make necessary changes in our lives? Are we

content to just leave things as they are? Do we approach God with humility? And what about table manners...we have an idea about the seating arrangement at the family dinner table...what about in church?

Attendance at Sunday Mass is the most visible way we show our acceptance of God's hospitality now and it should be a priority in our lives...not something we do when it's convenient. Jesus invites us to bring our cares and concerns and our sins to him so he can help us sort things out. He then invites us to feast on his own Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar...a foretaste of the "Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven." And we don't need to push each other out of the way to get to the Altar. There's plenty of room.

God has shown us extravagant hospitality and unconditional love in the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus. If we take his hospitality and love seriously, we will want to do what Saint John tells us to do in today's Epistle when he writes..."Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action." We too need to show extravagant hospitality and unconditional love toward others.

Saint John tells us we know we are being truthful with God and with ourselves when we take Jesus' commandment to love others as much as he loves us seriously. To love God is to love others is to love God and to work for the good of others.

Here's what God's invitation reads:

*You are invited to dine with me from now through all eternity. Believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And dine with Jesus as your host. To live in heaven eternally, all you have to do is RSVP...Yes!*

When we take the time to read the Invitation we realize the only reasonable RSVP is 'Yes'! We then embrace God's extravagant love and hospitality. We must also learn to practice humility.

The Parable of the Great Feast is about heaven. When it comes to table manners in heaven...God has promised the best seats in the house to everyone who answers 'yes' to his invitation!

We shouldn't wait to answer 'yes'!

