

NOVEMBER 5 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

Have you ever had dinner with a famous person? If so, you probably paid dearly for the privilege or you knew someone who got you in the door. Or, perhaps you were privileged to know the famous person yourself. But in any case, dining with a famous person is not something for the masses. Only a few get that privilege.

What about dinner with Jesus. You would think that everyone would jump at that opportunity, but as we will see, many turn down the invitation. When I say, “have dinner with Jesus,” I am using a metaphor of the joys and delights of being with Him in His kingdom, dining at the Messianic banquet that He provides throughout all eternity.

The parable is a clear message from Jesus to his Jewish listeners. Many of them, especially the religious leaders steeped in complacency and presumption, had rejected the invitation to follow Jesus and enter the Kingdom. Some of them would actually conspire to bring about his death. Their place would be given to those formerly seen as outcasts, both Jews and Gentiles, people aware of their needs, the “poor in spirit”. There would be a special place for the poor and the handicapped, people often seen by traditional Jews as people abandoned by God and buried in sin.

To go back to the beginning of the passage, blessed indeed are those who eat together in the Kingdom, but it is clear that only those who respond to the invitation will enjoy the privilege.

We have no more right to presumption than those Jews who rejected Christ. We too are being invited to go into the Lord's banquet hall, but it is important that we respond to the call. We do that by our totally accepting and living out the teaching of Jesus our Lord. And part of that teaching is that we, too, invite and welcome into our community the poor,

the crippled, the blind and the lame – taking these words in their broadest sense.

No more than those fellow diners of Jesus, our presence at the Kingdom banquet is never to be taken for granted.

One of the main hindrances that will keep you from having dinner with Jesus is that you are so full of your own goodness that you won't acknowledge your need for God's banquet.

In our parishes we struggle to get children to Sunday masses. We see more and more families skipping Sunday mass for their kids' sporting events. What are we to think when Sunday sports or other children's activities take precedence over Eucharist, the Lord's Day?

May be these parents teach their children that sports and such extracurricular activities are more important than the Eucharist.

Parents today are under a great deal of pressure to put their kids in high-performance sports. The obsession with children's sports can lead parents to sacrifice everything else important in their lives including God. As Catholic parents you must make sure that Sunday schedule works around attending Mass.

What is our take away from today's Gospel?

1. We need to look into our lives too and see if there is something that has become an "excuse" for not accepting God's invitation to his banquet?
2. Even if we have 'honourable excuses' we need to understand that there is an urgency to God's call. The Kingdom is here and we cannot postpone our response any longer.
3. In the parable, property, power and relationships were reasons for staying away from the banquet by those who were invited. What are

my reasons? What would be the reason for my saying, “Just one more minute and I’ll be with you?”