When my siblings and I were growing up our Mom and Dad would usually fix a big breakfast after Mass on Sunday. They would fix bacon, sometimes sausage, muffins, fruit “compoté” (as my Dad would say) and sometimes French toast. No matter what though, breakfast would always feature my Dad’s famous scrambled eggs! What made them special was that they were NEVER plain, he would always put something in them whether it was ham or bacon or sausage or Polish sausage. He was even known to use hot dogs or a combination of some or all of the above…it was awesome!...Not the hot dogs so much though.

His motto was: “you go with what’cha got!” and he meant it. Although the food was always great, this breakfast was often an opportunity to clean out the ‘frig to prevent waste. The French toast I mentioned would sometimes be made w/ hamburger or hot dog buns, you know, the two left from the 10 pack after using an 8 pack of hot dogs!?

Anyway, regardless of what it was that constituted the breakfast feast, it was prepared with all of us in mind and those who they may have invited from Mass that morning or anyone else who might show up, and this happened rather often (he would just add a little more milk to the eggs). There were a couple of things that he absolutely insisted on, and which we all knew: one was that we were to be ready to eat when the eggs were done and the other was that we were to take what we wanted and then were to pass it on; “the eggs are getting cold!” he would say and he had no patience, nor sympathy, for those who weren’t ready or who didn’t pass things quickly. We would say Grace and if someone wasn’t ready, we would start without them; if they didn’t pass things he would address that as well. That might sound somewhat rude but I think that anyone who has prepared a dinner party or banquet would agree that guests not dropping everything and not coming to the table prepared to eat when they are called or holding up the process is equally as rude, especially when they were given fair warning that the food was coming.

In today’s Gospel Jesus tells the Chief Priests and Elder, and us, the parable of the Wedding Feast. In this parable Jesus is telling us that this is our heads-up and fair warning. We are all invited to the eternal banquet that God promises and must DECIDE whether we will attend or not. If we do accept the invitation, which is the hope, we must be prepared, ready and willing to cooperate. In other words, admittance to the Feast is important but is not enough; an appropriate and ongoing response and participation is also necessary.

This Gospel is a continuation of Jesus’ dialogue with the Chief Priests and Elders that we heard last week. Jesus takes it up a notch this week by telling them that the banquet God promised and prepared for them is in fact for all humanity and that other guests will take their place if they choose not to attend. More importantly though, acceptance of the invitation requires faithful and sincere acceptance of the terms set forth by the host who is none other than God. The reward and benefit of full acceptance of both the invitation and the terms is nothing short of the fulfillment of the promise we hear in our first reading from Isaiah.

The first reading and the Gospel are both eschatological in nature which means they deal with the future and “Last Things” of Salvation History: its fulfillment if will. Isaiah gives us glimpse of the
banquet that God will provide for mankind when sin and death are conquered and the eternal kingdom is ushered in: the wedding feast of the King’s Son IS THAT BANQUET. The Chief Priests and Elders would have been familiar with this prophecy from Isaiah and in the parable Jesus is telling them that there is more to it. There is a responsibility involved with the feast which has everything to do with the way their faith in God is lived. Taken along with last week’s Gospel, these parables are meant to be cautionary tales to the leaders of Judaism in Jesus’ time. They must re-assess HOW they are living their faith and fulfilling their part of the covenant with God.

As I mentioned, these readings are eschatological in nature and therefore are cautionary tales for us as well. The Wedding Feast of the Son is seen as the marriage of Jesus, the King’s son, with the Church, the bride of Christ. The Feast is prepared; the banquet is set; how do WE respond to this knowledge? In the Gospel, some refused to come; others ignored the invitation and went back to their farms or their business. I’m sure many of us have come across fallen away Catholics that want nothing to do with the Church for one reason or another: maybe they disagree with what the Church has to say on certain matters or maybe they had a bad experience with someone within the Church. Whatever the case, their presence at the banquet is requested and their absence is noticed and missed! We must bring them back!

But what about those who ignored the invitation and went on with whatever it was that they were doing? I think this is even more of a concerning and pervasive problem today: that anything in our lives is more important than caring for where our lives lead us!? Each of us in some way has found something that has stood in the way of practicing our faith or living our faith faithfully. I have! We are pulled in so many directions and are distracted by so many things that we fail to see the importance of tomorrow when we are caught up in the now.

This parable is here to remind us that this is no ordinary Feast and each of us must actively decide to attend or not. This parable however also reminds us that if we do accept the invitation, we must be prepared and willing to accept and respect the conditions of the invitation.

God has been planning this banquet for a long, long time and is patiently waiting for our response to His invitation. More importantly, he is asking for our cooperation in it; to help those who are estranged; to reassess our priorities; to wash our hands of sin and be ready to sit down and pass the food if you will. Like the story of breakfast, a lot of Love goes into the preparation of the feast that is for our benefit; it is our responsibility to return that Love with faithful participation as a sign of gratitude and respect for the One who provides it for us.