

Homily: 27th Sunday after Pentecost (12th of Luke)
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
Gospel: (76) Luke 14:16-24 (*Forefathers*)
Date: 14 December 2025
Preacher: Father John C. Holoduek, OCA

We read in the parable that a man gave a great feast, and invited many people. Who holds this type of Feast... **God the Father**, and the Servant whom He sends to call People is **God the Son**, *the Lord Jesus Christ*. However, those who were first invited gave excuses and refused to come. **There are three excuses**. One had bought a field, *representing the riches of this world*. Another had bought a yoke of oxen to plow, *representing the commitments of this temporal life*. And the other had married a wife, *representing the relationships of this world* when they become more important than *our relationship with God*.

There is nothing wrong with buying property or working and investing in a career or other relationships of life. These are means for us to support our loved ones, those in need, and the Church. The problem is not with material things or family life, *but that those who refused the invitation used these things as excuses to decline the invitation of God*. They heard the call, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches *became like thorns in their hearts*, and they declined the invitation because *they preferred their own interests*, rather than **Communion with God**.

So, God invited other people to come and Feast with Him. Those who accepted were the ones who had humble hearts and were thankful for the privilege of being invited. God invited all people, but *only some accepted the invitation*. **In this parable, Jesus teaches us the value of humility**. The Kingdom of God is Prepared for the Humble who Put Their Trust in God: *The poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame responded to the call*, while the ones who were *too busy with their priorities rejected the invitation*.

Responding to the Call of God and His Unwavering Love comes from a heart that *Seeks God Above All Things*. We hear God when we want to become Hearers of God. This happens when our spiritual senses, what the *Church Fathers call the "nous"* (in Greek), or *"the eyes of the soul,"* are activated. Our spiritual senses are an extension of our bodily senses: taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight. **When the Grace of God comes to us, it**

fills our Souls and Bodies with Spiritual Joy, enhanced by our spiritual senses.

To sharpen our spiritual senses, we need to *cultivate a calm and attentive stillness before God*, which the Church Fathers call “hesychia” (in Greek), *that is a quietness before God*. We need to *make time in our busy lives to be alone with God, to pray to Him quietly and with an open heart, and to be still and listen to Him*. We also develop our spiritual senses by being open to *Receive from God His Call*, by *participating in the Holy Sacraments*, as well as *Reading the Scriptures and Spiritual Books*, daily. We also develop our spiritual senses by giving, such as devoting our talents, time, and treasures in serving others with the Love of Christ.

God continuously invites us to His Kingdom. We already begin to experience His Kingdom here and now when we respond. We experience it in our Communion with Him in the Holy Eucharist, and in the life of the Church. As Christ teaches us, His Kingdom is already within us. To enjoy the Kingdom is to Respond to God and Receive All His Blessings Which He Gives Us. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, ***What was the nature of the invitation? “Come: for behold, all things are ready.” For God the Father has prepared in Christ for the inhabitants of the earth those gifts which are bestowed upon the world through Him, even the forgiveness of sins . . . the communion of the Holy Spirit . . . and the Kingdom of heaven.***

When Christ gloriously appears as a Loving and Righteous God in His Second Coming, He will judge us according to our response to His invitation. There will be Surprising Revelations at the Final Judgment: some whom we might not think are close to God are closer to Him than we might imagine. It is a matter of each one’s heart. *It is up to us if we will respond to God*. He has given us His Grace. He has showered us with His Gifts. *He has redeemed us in Christ and Has given us the Holy Spirit. He also gives us Free Will, so that we can respond.*

The Honorable People were invited in the Parable, but they refused. The ones who were “compelled” to come were those who seemed to be Outcasts: *the Poor, the Maimed (like the woman with the hemorrhage), the Blind, the Lepers and the Lame*. Notice that God did not revoke the first invitation. The problem was with the ones who hardened their hearts.

God looks at the heart, not just outward appearances. The Humble respond to God's Love. They Accept the Invitation and Open Their Hearts, Entering the Kingdom. **God's Love Wants All to Be Saved, But We Need to Want to Be Saved.**

God Never Stops Calling Us, which is why we need to be aware of the hardness of our hearts, or the desire for things in this life that keep us from Him. Christ says that: *...**Many are Called, but Few are Chosen: The Ones Who are Chosen are the Ones Who Respond to the Call; They are Chosen because They Choose God Above All Things.***

As another illustration of God's Calling to Communion with Him, we remember that during this time of the year, we commemorate the Forefathers, *especially Patriarch Abraham, two Sundays before Christmas. We are reminded that Abraham invited three angels to a banquet, a symbolic representation of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament.* The scene is made immortal in the famous icon by **Andrei Rublev**, representing the Holy Trinity. The icon is also called **The Hospitality of Abraham....**

This beautiful icon reminds us that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit live eternally in communion with one another. The One God Who exists in Three Persons shares an eternal communion of love between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Mirroring that Blessed Life, God desires to bring us into Fellowship with Him, inviting us to His Banquet. He Loves Us and Calls Us to Respond to His Love.

Do we respond to God in faith as Abraham did? Every day, we have the opportunity to spread our hearts as a communion table so we can share in God's banquet. We open our hearts and the ears of our souls. Everything that brings us closer to God is an invitation. The Lord says to us, ***come and enter My Kingdom.*** By putting His love first in our lives, we respond to His call without having other things become obstacles or even excuses. Or, we proud enough to offer only the Cave?

Can we Cultivate Humility and Meekness so that We Can Respond to His Call? This is Not Easy! It's Not Easy to Recognize. But, His Kingdom is within us, and we receive His eternal life when we respond. **This is Our Challenge, today...The Challenge of the Nativity Fast!**