**Tuesday of the 31st Week in Ordinary Time**
**Cistercian Monastery of Monterey – California, November 3, 2026**

*Readings: Philippians 2:5–11; Luke 14:15–24*

"A man gave a great dinner to which he invited many. When the time for the dinner came, he dispatched his servant to say to those invited, 'Come, everything is now ready.' But one by one, they all began to excuse themselves." (Lk 14:16–18)

Jesus tells this parable in response to the exclamation of one of the guests dining with Him: "Blessed is the one who will dine in the Kingdom of God!" (Lk 14:15). This means that the parable speaks to us of God the Father inviting us to his Son's wedding feast—inviting us, in fact, to the banquet in the kingdom of God. The parable thus seeks to make us aware of the possible reactions we ourselves might have when faced with this invitation.

Each of the three invited guests makes an excuse for not being able to accept the invitation to the wedding feast. Each has an excuse that he believes is sufficient to decline it. But if we analyze these excuses closely, none of them justifies refusing the invitation. Can't the field purchased by the first who is invited wait until the next day to be inspected? Can't the oxen purchased by the second be tested after the wedding? Must the man who has just gotten married really spend that day with his wife, with whom he may live for fifty years? Nothing justifies refusing to attend the wedding.

The excuses they offer thus reveal that the real problem is a lack of respect for this invitation. These men despise the invitation to the wedding, and Jesus makes us aware that we, too, might behave this way toward the Father's invitation to the Son's wedding in the Kingdom of God.

Why might we despise this invitation? What is at stake in our acceptance or rejection of the invitation to the wedding feast of the Son of God?
The excuses of the three who was invited are drawn from daily life, which consists of goods, work, and family life. Deep down, these men are saying: "My daily life doesn't require me to attend the wedding; attending the wedding adds nothing to my work, my goods, or my family; on the contrary: if I go to the wedding, I'll waste time that I could devote to these daily realities."

Aren't these, to some extent, also our own excuses and thoughts when we are called, for example, to pray, to participate in the Eucharist, or to celebrate the Divine Office? Or when we are called to pause to listen to and meditate on the Word of God, or to adore the Lord in silence?

This is why St. Benedict urges us to wholeheartedly accept God's invitation to the wedding feast—the encounter with Him in prayer. He writes in Chapter 43 of the Rule: "When the hour of the Divine Office comes, as soon as the signal is heard, let everyone put aside whatever they are doing and hurry there with the utmost haste, yet always with gravity, so as not to give occasion for distraction. Nothing is to be placed before the Work of God." (RB 43:1–3)

But why is this important? Why is God's invitation to the wedding feast the most important thing to accept? How does participating in the wedding feast change our lives?

Life itself does not change. The field to be worked remains the same, the oxen used for plowing are the same, and even one's wife remains the same. The difference is not that daily life changes, but that the person living it changes—the heart with which we experience everything—work, belongings, family, friends, joys, and sorrows—changes.

And how does the heart change? It changes because whoever takes part in the wedding becomes a friend of the one who invited them, becomes a friend of the bridegroom, becomes a friend of the King, of the Lord—becomes a friend of God!

When we gratefully accept every invitation from the Lord to be with Him, to unite ourselves to Him, our whole life changes because we can experience everything with the awareness, joy, and peace that come from being friends of Christ and children of the Father. Suddenly, we are no longer alone in living our lives—our joys and sorrows, our struggles and disappointments, and the challenges of life and human relationships. Now we experience everything with the Lord, certain of His friendship, of His love for us, for our daily lives, for our loved ones, for our work—down to every tiny detail of our day, which God makes important because He loves us always and forever!

Then our whole life becomes a wedding feast—it becomes the wedding banquet of the Kingdom of God!

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