

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

["My friend, how is it you came in here without a wedding garment?"]

Matthew 22: 12

In the second Eucharist Prayer, after the words of consecration there is a short phrase that says, "Make us worthy to share eternal life." We all want to share eternal life. We all want to spend our eternity in heaven with God, with all the saints and angels, with all our deceased loved ones. That is our hope. It should also be our goal.

But heaven is not primarily a place. Heaven is a way of living; it is a relationship with God in and through Jesus Christ. Heaven can never be something that we can earn by doing good deeds. As if it all depended on me and what I did. My doing the good is not what prompts God to bless me. God blesses me and hopes I will respond to the blessing. Heaven can never be something that we deserve because we have been faithful and true to the Lord. Heaven really is not some reward God has established for us for keeping our noses clean in this life.

Heaven is a relationship of real closeness and intimacy with the very God of the universe, with his Son in the Holy Spirit. But this is no one-sided relationship. God gives us the gift of heaven because God is generous. God gives us the gift of heaven because if He did not there is no way we could ever experience it. God gives us the gift of heaven because He loves us so much. But we must make no mistake about it. We are expected to be truly appreciative. We are expected to grasp that God's way of doing things and God's way of seeing things is heaven. We are expected to realize that God's way of doing things and seeing things is not something that we can pick or choose. It does not need to be improved upon or altered in any way.

That's what the wedding garment means in the reading for today. We put on the wedding garment of acceptance. We put on the wedding garment of surrender. We put on the wedding garment of living in accord with all that God has established, in every aspect and dimension of our lives. If we think that we can substitute our own way of seeing things or doing things and it will sit right with God we had better think again. When we pray "Lord, make us worthy of eternal life," we must mean that we want to embrace everything of Christ. If not we will hear what the man in the gospel hears today. "Friend, how is it you came in here without a wedding garment?" That is the question for this week.