You are Chosen. Will you accept the invitation?

Over the past two years, my wife and I have enjoyed celebrating the vows of marriage with two of our children. After having experienced these delightful wedding celebrations with family and friends, I was intrigued by the gospel passage from Matthew in which Jesus tells the parable of an extremely strange wedding feast. In the parable, a king had prepared a wonderful reception for his son's wedding. However, those who were invited refused to attend (Thankfully, my wife and I did not have that problem for our children's weddings).

As the story unfolds, the banquet hall was filled only after much persistence on the part of the servants who go to great lengths to find the poor and those who were deemed "unworthy" to participate in the festivities. Strangely, the story ends with a man who did not have the proper wedding garments and was therefore escorted from the party. The gospel reading concludes with the familiar quote from Jesus, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

The powerful symbolism of this gospel reading can be reflected in two important terms: receiving the "call" and taking the call or being "chosen." We live in a society currently where we are bombarded with calls from many sources. Our children need to be picked up, taken to daycare or after school activities, we have errands to run, vacations to take, or even movies and games to play. Similarly, our email boxes are filled with spam with offers of great health, coupons, cheap products, and false threats from the federal government, the IRS, or banks. Electronic billboards entice us to attend concerts, enroll in educational programs, or buy unnecessary products.

Throughout all of this, we often forget that God is waiting for us. Like the King, God has issued us an open invitation.

In today's world, it is extremely difficult to recognize God's invitation to the banquet. But, it is our responsibility through discipleship to accept or "opt-in" to God's invitation. Our challenge is to stop, listen, and accept God's always open invitation to his banquet. Maybe God's call is so simple that its message is drowned out by all of the calls we receive on a daily basis. Just as those individuals who were summoned by the King to attend his son's wedding did not respond because they saw no value in attending the wedding feast. How often do we fail to make time for God? What is distracting us from listening to Him?

God has already chosen each of us; it's our responsibility to accept the invitation. However, we have to do more than accept the invitation, we have to show up. But not only that, we have to wear the proper attire. After the attendees had arrived for the party, the King spotted a man who was not dressed appropriately for a wedding reception. He was therefore thrown out of the party. Similarly to the man who was escorted from the event, we too have to make sure that we are dressed properly to participate in the celebrations. In a Christian sense, our garments are likened to our souls. We have to be certain that we have done all that we could in this life to prepare
for the party. Answering God's call cannot just be going through the motions of living a good life. Doing God's will must come from the heart, so that we will not experience the fate of the person who lacked the proper attire.

While the invitation is waiting for all of us, it requires some effort. We have to acknowledge God's invitation, and put in work to be presentable for the wedding feast. Because of the effort required, not many choose to accept God's call, hence "few are chosen." The onus is on us individually to distance ourselves from our distractions in order to accept His generous invitation.

In considering how to get "chosen," we can again recall so many sad memories in our lives when we were not picked as a child to be on a team, or as adults when we were not chosen for that promotion, or when we were not invited to the fancy dinner party. We heard the call but did not get chosen. Fortunately, with God, if we follow Jesus Christ's simple message, we will not have to risk the devastation of not being chosen to join him in eternal life in heaven. Doing God's will must come from the heart, so that we will not experience the fate of the person who attended the wedding but lacked a wedding gown and was not allowed to partake in the feast.

Don't let God's invitation to you go unanswered. Be sure to acknowledge, accept, and be attired for the banquet that awaits you.