

The bride and the bridegroom at the supper of the Lamb

By Dr. Edward Sri. Updated by Fr. Gerard CJM From the Catholic Agency Praying mass...

The priest says: “Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.”

These words certainly command our attention. **And they underscore how the Eucharist is no ordinary meal, for they recall a climactic moment in the book of Revelation when Jesus comes to unite himself to his people in a great heavenly wedding feast.**

In this scene, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is depicted as a bridegroom joining himself to his bride, the Church. An angel announces this loving union by saying, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9). In this translation, the priest at Mass echoes this angelic invitation to the heavenly wedding feast.

When you hear these words in the liturgy, therefore, you should realize that you are, in a sense, **receiving a wedding invitation!** And at this great marriage feast, you are no ordinary guest. When you come down the aisle to receive Holy Communion, you come as the bride, as a member of the Church. And you come to be united with your divine Bridegroom who gives Himself to you in the most intimate way possible here on earth—in the Holy Eucharist.

Here, we see how the Eucharist involves an intimate, loving communion with our Lord Jesus—one that is likened to the union shared between a husband and wife. Indeed, Holy Communion is a participation in that heavenly wedding supper of the Lamb, which celebrates the union of the divine bridegroom, Jesus, with his bride, the Church.

Amazing the Son of God

In response to this invitation, we say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.”

These words recall the humility and trust of the Roman centurion in the gospels who asked Jesus to heal his servant who was at his house, paralyzed and in distress. As a Gentile, outside of God’s covenant, and a Roman officer in charge of a hundred soldiers who were oppressing God’s people, this centurion humbly recognizes his sinful condition and his unfavorable position among the Jews. He acknowledges that he—as a gentile, a Roman and a centurion—is not worthy to have Jesus, the holy Jewish rabbi, come to his home: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.”

Yet the Roman Centurion also expresses a great faith that surpasses that of many others in the gospels and amazes even Jesus, which says a lot. (After all, it must take a lot to amaze the Son of God!) Even though up to this point in the gospels, Jesus has only performed healings for people in his presence, this Roman centurion believes Jesus can heal from afar—a long distance miracle—simply by speaking his word: “But only say the word, and my servant shall be healed” (see Matthew 8:8; Luke 7:6-7). Jesus praises this man for his faith.

Like the centurion, we, at this moment in the Mass, recognize our own sinful condition and our unworthiness to have Jesus come sacramentally under the “roof” of our souls in Holy Communion. Yet

just as the centurion believed Jesus was able to heal his servant, so do we trust that Jesus can heal us as he becomes the most intimate guest of our souls in the Eucharist. Thus, we will say words similar to that of the trusting Centurion, “But only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

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