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-- At first glance, our gospel parable today seems totally inconsistent. Here the king goes to great lengths to invite all sorts of people to the wedding banquet without distinction. But, after doing that, he seems to assume all of them have a wedding garment and kicks out a man who's missing one. It doesn't seem right—he just came in off the street!

-- In fact, this parable combines two different stories in order to teach us a lesson. Our Lord and king reaches out to all people, to the ends of the earth. God doesn't have a "club mentality," as if you have to be part of an elite to share in his banquet.

-- Like the liturgical celebration of a wedding in the Catholic Church (as opposed to the wedding reception), it is an open celebration. God seeks us out because he wants to share the joy of his heavenly banquet.

-- But we have to accept that invitation. And that means more than just "showing up," so to speak. The wedding garment is not something we buy or earn by our own efforts. It is the grace of God we freely receive. That includes the grace of conversion of life.

-- All of us are in need of that grace. At the Synod on the family in Rome this week, one bishop said we should drop the term "living in sin," for those e.g., living together before they are married.

-- I've never used that term with couples. To be truthful, all of us are "living in sin," in the sense that we all are sinful people. Jesus himself said once, *Let him who is without sin cast the first stone*, when a woman caught in adultery was brought before him.

-- But he also said *From now on, avoid this sin*. He gave her the grace of conversion, and she accepted it. She put on the wedding garment. She did not cling to her past.

-- Not stigmatizing a couple with the "living in sin" title does not mean that I approve of living together before marriage. Even purely secular studies have shown that this is not a good way to prepare for marriage,

and the marital success rate is lower than couples who do not live together prior to marriage.

-- But we meet couples where they are at, and try to move them toward a fuller Christian vision of life and marriage.

-- Another bishop suggested we should not refer to gay people as "intrinsically disordered." Nearly all psychologists would agree with him, and I would as well. They should not be second class citizens in the Church.

-- However, that doesn't mean that two same-sex people can be united in the Sacrament of Matrimony. And all are called to exercise the virtue of chastity, whether they are gay, straight, bisexual, married, celibate or single.

-- God's grace is offered to all of us to exercise that virtue. Though none of us are perfect, we are all called to try our best. That is the wedding garment we must freely accept.

-- God's invitation to the heavenly banquet is offered to all. We can choose to come or not. To enter we must put on the wedding garment the Lord gives to us: not particular clothes, but the wedding garment of love and conversion of heart.

-- And that is a lifelong process. All of us are on the road to that conversion, or we are turning away from it. We can't straddle the fence.

-- My prayer is that all of you, along with myself, will open ourselves to God's grace shown in the many people around us, especially those different than ourselves.

-- May we also be open to God's grace of continuing conversion of heart and mind. That is the wedding garment God alone can give us.