

Bread for the World Sunday 2017

Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.

– Matthew 22:9



PHOTO © PETERIK WIGGERS/CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Bread for the World Sunday is an opportunity to join others in praying for those who struggle with hunger—and to rededicate ourselves to efforts that help end hunger. Our prayerful work to end hunger is a response to the Gospel’s invitation to take part in the banquet of God’s mercy and abundance that is ours through Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:1-14).

Our prayers are especially urgent at this time. South Sudan is suffering from a devastating famine, and famine threatens Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen. Drought is spreading throughout other parts of Africa. Humanitarian assistance and long-term solutions to hunger are more important than ever.

In the United States, Congress is making budget decisions that will affect the lives of millions in our own country and abroad. The president has proposed unprecedented budget cuts that target international and domestic programs vital to hungry people. Dismantling or cutting funding for these time-tested and life-saving programs would take us backward and make the goal of ending hunger by 2030 unlikely.

These threats have led Bread for the World and many of our church partners to deepen our spiritual engagement during the 115th Congress through 2018. In the spirit of Esther, who used her influence to advocate for her people (Esther 4), Bread for the World is inviting people to take part in “For Such a Time as This,” a commitment to prayer, fasting, and advocacy.

Today and in the months to come, we pray for all those who suffer from hunger, need, or injustice. We pray also for our elected leaders that they might govern with wisdom and make ending hunger — in our own country and around the world — a national priority. And we pray that we will use our influence to urge our nation’s leaders to strengthen U.S. leadership in achieving the international goal of ending hunger by 2030.

Our faith is in Christ, who makes all things new, and we place our hope in God’s vision of a world without hunger.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Will You Accept Jesus' Invitation?

Today's Gospel includes one very strange parable. Some New Testament scholars suggest that Matthew may have combined several parables into what we know as the Parable of the Wedding Feast, which may explain why the story seems disjointed.

The beginning is simple enough. A king is preparing a wedding banquet for his son, one of the most joyful occasions imaginable. But, oddly, those who were invited refuse to come. Apparently, all of them refuse.

In response, the king tries to make the banquet more appealing by telling the prospective guests what food will be awaiting them. Still no one comes. In fact, some of those invited kill the servants who have come on the king's behalf, which seems more than a little bizarre.

At this point the reader of Matthew is wondering: How did this story get so dark?

It gets darker still. The infuriated king sends out his army to track down the murderers and level their cities.

Next, apparently having moved past his anger, the king has his servants to go into the streets and invite anyone they can find. But when the king arrives at his banquet, he sees a man without the traditional wedding garment. The king orders his servants to tie up this guest and throw him out.

But how, the reader will wonder, was the wedding guest supposed to get a garment at such short notice? (As an aside, you also have to wonder what the married son and his new wife think about all this. Probably not the wedding reception that they had hoped for.)

Overall, what is going on?

Well, let's assume that these are in fact several stories placed together by Matthew. That still begs the question: What was Matthew's — and Jesus' — larger point?

Sermon suggestions and other lectionary resources are available in the free monthly online newsletter, *Bread for the Preacher*. To subscribe, visit www.bread.org/preacher.

Mainly it was about responding to an invitation. And, more importantly, the way you respond.

All of us know Jesus' invitation into the reign of God. All are invited. Yet that invitation requires us to do something. It requires us to put Jesus' words into action. It's not enough

to say that you've accepted Christ. That is, it's not enough to say that you've accepted the invitation. You have to come to the feast and wear the right garment.

In other words, you have to *show* that you've accepted the invitation.

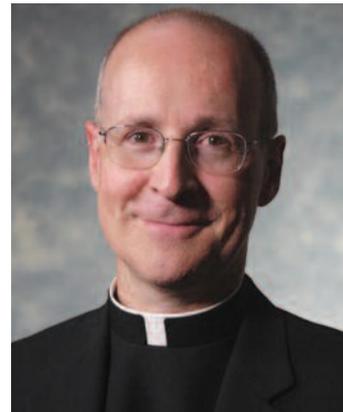
So what should we do to avoid being murdered by the enraged king, have our cities destroyed, or be tossed into the darkness? Put more positively, what do we have to do to gain admittance to the joyful banquet that God is throwing?

We find one answer three chapters later, in the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel. There Jesus gives us his litmus test for entrance into the banquet, or into the kingdom of heaven. It all depends on how you treat the "least" of his brothers and sisters. Do you feed the hungry? Clothe the naked? Welcome the stranger? No? Well, then you're just as bad as the people who didn't bother to come to the banquet or the fellow who didn't bother to get dressed.

Most of Jesus' parables focus on the carrot — the rewards of the reign of God. But here Jesus is focusing on the stick — what happens if you don't respond adequately to the invitation.

So which will it be? Are you coming or not?

James Martin, SJ, is a Jesuit priest, editor-at-large of America magazine, and author of many books including The New York Times bestseller Jesus: A Pilgrimage and The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything.



James Martin, SJ

A Responsive Prayer for Bread for the World Sunday

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your wonderful love for your people. How great and beautiful is your goodness and mercy! We know that you hold us and that all the goods we enjoy come from your generosity. We repent that we often do not notice those who lack the necessities of life around us and that we sometimes ignore the despair and suffering of others. Fill us with your spirit of compassion so that we freely share your abundance with others. Lord in your goodness,

Hear our prayer.

Blessed Jesus, Lord and Savior, we give thanks that you invite us to your great feast, and we ask that we be prepared to join others at the table you set before us. Accepting God's mercy and forgiveness, may our lives manifest your love for all people. Lord in your goodness,

Hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit, source of peace and inspiration, you make us good stewards who use all our gifts in your service. Teach us to love in an intelligent way and use the gifts we carry (even the gifts of democracy) for your work. Help us to minister in a pastoral and prophetic way to our nation's leaders so that they truly practice justice. Lord in your goodness,

Hear our prayer.

Finally, we remember all the people who walk in despair, who hunger for the equal bread, and who seek justice. Let us be instruments of your peace in this world, that we might invite others to take part in the banquet of mercy and abundance you prepare for us. We raise all the petitions that we have said and the requests of our hearts, trusting that you are with us, to the end of the age. Lord in your goodness,

Hear our prayer.

Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, a Lutheran pastor and co-author of Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church for Service to the World, prepared this prayer. A version of this prayer in Spanish and other worship resources in Spanish are available at www.bread.org/domingo.



Rev. Alexia Salvatierra

Bulletin or Pulpit Announcement

Today we join with churches across the country to observe Bread for the World Sunday. Moved by God's grace in Jesus Christ, we pray for all of those who suffer from hunger and want, and we rededicate ourselves to ending hunger in God's world.

Prayer of the Day

Holy and righteous God, you hear the prayers of all who cry out to you in distress. Open our ears to those in need and transform our hearts, so that we who have been abundantly blessed may be a blessing to others, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayer Before or After Communion

O God, you feed us with your very self, living bread for the life of the world. May we who share this blessed meal embody your compassion and faithfully show forth your love on behalf of all who hunger, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Benediction

May the blessing of God be upon you. May the light of Christ illumine your way. And may the gifts of the Holy Spirit abound in your life to the glory of God and the good of all creation. *Amen.*

The two prayers and the benediction above were prepared by the Rev. Dr. A.C. (Chris) Repp, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Champaign, Illinois.

How Your Church Can Celebrate Bread for the World Sunday

1 Select a Sunday or weekend when you will celebrate. Bread for the World Sunday is scheduled for October 15, but you are welcome to participate on another date if that works best for your church. Announce the date in your church newsletter, weekly email, and on social media. Make sure you have the resources you'll need. Free resources in English and Spanish are available — including bulletin inserts and a Bread for the World Sunday poster. To order or download these resources, visit www.bread.org/sunday.

2 Plan which elements in your worship service will address hunger. Perhaps there can be a special announcement at the beginning of the service or an opening prayer. The sermon might address the response of faith to hunger. Many churches have a “mission moment” before the offering or collection. Use the enclosed children’s sermon to involve children in the worship service.

Prayers for the day are an ideal opportunity to remember those who are hungry — and our nation’s decision makers who can change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist. Use the enclosed responsive prayer or have members contribute their own prayers. Additional prayers and worship resources can be found at www.bread.org/sunday.

Create worship stations during your service: a place to light a candle, a table for writing a prayer request, and a station to make a commitment to pray for someone suffering from hunger or poverty. You may wish to create a collection point for canned goods or toiletry items to support a local hunger ministry.

3 Devote a Bible study or adult forum to the Christian response to hunger. You might invite a guest from a community feeding program or someone who has emigrated from a country where hunger is acute. You can order or download resources designed for youth and adult Christian education at www.bread.org/store.

4 As part of your Bread for the World Sunday celebration, you may want to conduct an Offering of Letters — taking time to write brief letters to members of Congress. In 2017, we are urging Congress to make funding decisions that put our country and the world on track to end hunger by 2030. For a sample letter and more information, visit www.bread.org/ol.

5 Gather a special offering or collection. You may wish to allocate the funds to a denominational hunger program, a local feeding program, or Bread for the World. You may order free offering or pew envelopes at www.bread.org/sunday.

6 Bread for the World is inviting individuals and churches to be part of *For Such a Time as This: A Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Advocacy* during the 115th Congress, through 2018. To make your commitment and to sign up for monthly reminders and resources, visit www.bread.org/fast.

7 Plan now to send members of your church to Washington, D.C., for Bread for the World’s annual Lobby Day on June 12, 2018. This is a life-changing opportunity to join others in worship, learning, and speaking to members of Congress about making the end of hunger a national priority.

About Bread for the World

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. God’s grace in Jesus Christ moves us to reach out to our neighbors — whether they live next door, in another state, or on another continent.

The individuals and churches involved in Bread for the World represent a broad range of Christian faith traditions. We embrace and reflect the growing diversity of culture, ethnicity, and religious practices.

Bread for the World’s work is made possible by contributions from tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of churches across the country. We invite you to join us by visiting www.bread.org/join or calling 800-822-7323.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20024
800-822-7323 www.bread.org

Sugerencia para mensaje: Mateo 22:1-14

¿Por qué invitamos a nuestra familia y amigos a celebrar con nosotros nuestro cumpleaños o cualquier otro evento especial? *Debido a que deseamos que se sientan gozosos, compartan nuestra emoción y celebren nuestros logros.*

¿Cómo respondemos a la invitación a una fiesta? *Respondemos por teléfono, enviando un correo electrónico, o hablando personalmente con la persona que nos invitó. Tal vez compremos ropa nueva o nos vistamos más elegantes. Tal vez hasta compremos un regalo para obsequiárselo a la persona que nos invitó.*

Escucharemos una lectura del evangelio de Mateo. (De haberse efectuado ya la lectura: Escuchamos una lectura del evangelio de Mateo). Estamos casi al final del recuento que hace Mateo de la vida de Jesús. Jesús se encuentra en Jerusalén, en el templo, como lo estuvo cuando tenía 12 años de edad. En esta ocasión, sin embargo, los ancianos y maestros están argumentando con él. Estos desacuerdos llevarán a la muerte de Jesús en la cruz.

En medio de este conflicto, Jesús nos relata una historia acerca de un banquete de boda. El mismo trata con aquellos quienes aceptan la invitación y los que la rechazan. En nuestra lección bíblica, un rey se está preparando para celebrar un banquete de boda con su hijo. Todos los invitados que fueron invitados a asistir, rehusaron la invitación. El rey, gentilmente repite la invitación, pero nadie asistió. Por último, él se enoja y casi se da por vencido. Sin embargo, envía a sus sirvientes a invitar a cualquier persona que encuentren en las calles. El tiempo de la boda había llegado. Pero los invitados no vestían la indumentaria apropiada para la celebración. El rey se enfurece, una vez más, y desea echar a los invitados que no estaban vestidos apropiadamente y que no se habían preparado. ¿Qué está tratando Jesús de enseñarnos a través de esta historia con respecto a nuestra respuesta a su invitación?

Ideas para actividades educativas

Dramatice la historia bíblica utilizando voluntarios. Al finalizar, lleve a cabo una discusión de la misma.

A través de esta historia, Jesús nos está diciendo que el gobierno o el reino de Dios es semejante a una gran fiesta familiar, a la cual asisten tíos, tías y primos. Y ahora, en nuestra lectura del Evangelio, Jesús anuncia que su fiesta familiar también incluye a aquellos que no forman parte de la familia. De hecho, algunos de estos desconocidos podrían hasta reemplazar a los miembros de la familia. Y cuando aceptamos la invitación de Jesús para formar parte de su familia, no podemos sino darles la bienvenida a estas nuevas personas. En la misma manera en la cual nosotros invitamos a nuestra familia y amigos a los eventos especiales, Dios invita a todo el mundo a compartir en su reino.

¿Qué significa compartir en la nueva y grande familia de Dios, la cual incluye a todo el mundo? ¿Cómo demuestras aceptar la invitación de Jesús para formar parte de su familia? *Tratando a los demás generosamente, ayudando a aquellos que se encuentran en necesidad, participando en la iglesia, ayudando a tu familia en las tareas del hogar, pidiéndole a nuestros líderes que sean justos y bondadosos con las personas que tienen necesidad.*

¿De qué manera ayudas a aquellos vecinos y otras personas de tu comunidad que están enfrentando tiempos difíciles? *Alimentando a los que padecen hambre, dándole la bienvenida a nuevas familias, ayudando a los padres a asegurarse de que sus hijos tengan suficiente para crecer y aprender.*

Joanne Ruddy, asociada para publicaciones y recursos de Pan para el Mundo, preparó las sugerencias para involucrar a los niños en el Domingo de Pan para el Mundo. Antes de fungir en esta capacidad, Joanne trabajó como maestra de escuela primaria y también enseñó en la Reservación Navajo en St. Michaels, Arizona.





pan para el mundo

TEN FE. TERMINA EL HAMBRE.

425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20024
800-822-7323 www.bread.org