

## Commentary for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Hilaire Belloc wrote: "Wherever the Catholic sun does shine, there is always laughter and good red wine." Would Belloc say that about us?

We are told it takes seventeen face muscles to smile but forty-three to frown. Laughter is the only tranquilizer yet developed that has no side effects. Our expression is the most important garment we wear. Yet, how many of us know fellow-Christians who never smile? They walk about with an eternal mad on their face. They are people one avoids. Undertakers on the job are happier looking than they.

In today's parable, Jesus reminds His Jewish audience that when the Messiah comes, they will enjoy a first class sit down supper with Lenox China and Baccarat crystal. The menu is alluded to in today's Isaiah 25: "juicy red food and pure choice wines." Notice not wine but wines. White with the lobster and red with the filet mignon. It will be the mother of all parties. This is one six star banquet weight watchers should avoid.

Jesus compares living in His company to the equivalent of a party. His Church should be a happy place. To sign on with Him should be as great an occasion as going to a banquet filled with warm laughter, prime ribs, aged wines, chocolate-dipped strawberries, and brandy from Napoleon's cellar.

We should remind ourselves of this wedding parable. Often the charge against the Church is it removes

joie de vivre from life. Many argue the Gospels have them do the deeds which they dislike and avoid the activities which they want to perform.

I dislike those banal prints picturing Jesus laughing His head off, but they touch upon a truth. He could not have been gloomy. Firstly, children were constantly pestering Him. Kids avoid sad sacks. Secondly, had He disliked parties, would He have walked many miles to the Cana wedding reception? The record suggests He was so anxious to get to that party He crashed it. Thirdly, because He went to so many parties, His enemies called Him "a glutton and wine drinker." (Mt 11:19) Fourthly, had He been a spoilsport, why would He have hosted a gourmet supper party the night before His death? Would you have the heart to play grip and grin host at your last supper?

The conclusion is Jesus loved pleasant times, loud laughter, and good red wine. He loved to party hearty.

His puckish sense of humor caused this young Asiatic Jew to use amusing illustrations, puns, and jokes. He spoke them with a full smile. It is a pity we don't have Him on video tape in living color. His stories raised a chuckle, even a giggle, on the part of His spellbound audience. His patter was homey and earthy. The Gospels tell us that Jesus often went into the mountains

alone. Why? GK Chesterton speculates the apostles made funny, even ridiculous remarks. He did not want to offend them by laughing in their faces. So, He ran into the mountains holding His sides and letting the laughter come out in steady bursts. If Jesus had given us an eighth sacrament, it might have been the Sacrament of Laughter. He would have enjoyed Locke's definition of laughter as "sudden glory."

Early Christians got the point. They were called hilares. That is the Latin adjective from which the word hilarious comes. They possessed a "certain holy hilarity." They went about their lives with a bounce in their steps and a smile on their faces. They were fun people to hang around with. They behaved as though they were forever at a party. They attracted millions of converts. The latter wanted a piece of that party. Wouldn't you? (William Barclay)

When Beethoven wrote his Ode to Joy, he might have been thinking of the joyful news of Jesus. So, smile often. Let people sense Jesus does make a serious difference in your life. Worship God on Sunday and smile with Him through the week.

The authentic way of finding joy is by focusing on the three letters of the word. J: place Jesus first. O: place others second. Y: place yourself last. (Unknown)

Become pro choice. Choose to save life rather than destroy it. Choose to forgive rather than curse. Choose to smile rather than frown. Blessed are the joymakers. (Unknown)

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