

A NOTE TO PARENTS

For the last three weeks, our Gospels from Matthew have presented the Kingdom of God as a vineyard. This week, the image changes, and Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as a wedding party.

Jesus says the feast is for the wedding of the King's Son. He never says who the bride is, but for two thousand years many Christians have felt that the bride is each one of us. Each of us can be the Cinderella who is taken from the ash heap, wonderfully dressed in dazzling garments, and carried off to the king's palace to live happily ever after with the handsome prince. All we have to do is desire it.

Fairy tales, with their inevitable ending of "happily ever after," can make deeply suggestive connections for children. They can tell children that joy follows pain and that at the end of the difficult adventure there is always something to celebrate with great joy. Don't try to spell this out for your children as you read fairy tales with them—pulling insights like these out into the light of day only spoils them, like telling secrets. In the same way, there is no reason to go into details with them about why Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as a wedding. The message will get through all by itself. What we *can* talk about is *celebration*.

Children love celebrations. With Halloween right around the corner and Christmas not far behind, none of us parents needs reminding how much children love the incidentals of our culture's holidays: the decorations, the costumes, the traditions, the special foods (even if they eat only a bite), the holiday songs. None of this is news to the Church. The Prayer Book speaks of the "celebration" of the Eucharist. We too express our involvement in a deep and holy joy by using decorations, special clothes, traditional gestures and flourishes, and sacramental food. With a little help, children can understand our worship as celebration, and join in it with real integrity, long before they are able to express clearly exactly what it is we are celebrating. The King's Son invited them; they have the right to come to the party.

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JESUS TOLD THIS STORY:

A king invited important people to his son's wedding. But they didn't want to come!



The king sent out his servants to find other guests.



The king handed out special wedding robes, and the party began. 🎵 🎵 🎵



The king saw someone without a wedding robe. That person had to leave!

Weddings are the happiest kind of parties. In stories about weddings, they always say that everyone "lived happily ever after." Jesus said that's the kind of party God wants to have for us!

Make a party in this room. Put up decorations, set out party food, and draw happy guests in party clothes, having a wonderful time!

