

Trinity 2 (2026)

I am thinking this morning of symbols of the Christian faith.

Can you think of any? ////

Yes, of course you can . . . the **cross!**

You find it around people's necks, along highways in the South, tattooed on body parts and perhaps most conspicuously atop church spires.

Is the cross misused? Probably. None of us who identify with it live up to what it represents perfectly.

Nevertheless, we pray that whenever, wherever it is displayed people will see Jesus . . . see Him taking the weight of the sin of the world upon Himself so that all who look may find hope, peace and life.

The cross is indeed a powerful symbol of the Christian faith. Are there any others?

What about the **fish**? ///

As early as the second century, when Christians were still a persecuted minority, the fish became a secret sign among followers of Jesus that a person who drew it in the sand or displayed it in some other way could be trusted.

An acrostic of the Greek word for fish -
- ἰχθύς – was seen as representing: "**Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour**". ///

This morning I want to throw in one more, and this one may come as a surprise: a **banquet table laden with good things**.

I have, in fact, a solid biblical reason for wanting to elevate a table of food to the status of a Christian symbol.

Going back at least to Isaiah, a great banquet was associated with the arrival of the Kingdom [or reign] of God. The prophet writes:

“And in this mountain [Mount Zion or Jerusalem] shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

In case you are not up on your “Wines on the lees” this expression refers to the best . . . that which has risen above the dregs.

I saw somewhere a sign reading: **“Life is too short for bad wine.”** I suppose the same is true in the age to come!

Jesus picks up this image of the banquet in the story He tells in today’s Gospel reading.

He tells it against the backdrop of the failure of many of the well-to-do, ritual-keeping, self-

sufficient, religious people of His day to get on board with His kingdom movement.

They professed with their lips their longing to be a part of God's new age and to share in the great Messianic meal foretold by Isaiah, yet they were refusing to come to the feast.

The signs that God's new day had dawned . . . that the true Davidic King had landed . . . were all around them. After all, the blind were receiving their sight, the deaf their hearing, the lame were walking, the dead were being raised up. What more could you ask for?

Yet, many of those in the upper echelons, including the Pharisee and his guests with whom Jesus was eating that day when He tells this parable, were refusing to get on board.

Before we picked up reading, we are told that these Pharisees were *watching* Jesus, and

not in a good way. They were looking not to emulate but to discredit.

Jesus was at *their* party, but in fact it was He who was staging the greatest party of all time – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as it is called in the Revelation of St. John the Divine (19:6-9).

They were invited but were refusing to come. They correspond to the people in the parable who made excuses when the announcement was made to come to the feast.

Material possessions, business deals, family affairs were some of the things that were occupying their attention.

These are things that still keep men and women out of heaven.

I should hasten to say none of these are sinful in and of themselves. Rather, they are

good things gone amuck. A key issue in this parable is **priorities**.

Let me pause here and ask, What's on first, what's on second, in your life? What are your priorities?

Recently, I came across a list of excuses people give for not going to church. Allow me to share a few with you, followed by a comment or two of my own.

1. Sunday is my only day for sleeping.

Self-care should be a priority, yet a reordering of one's affairs can usually overcome this hurdle. One makes time for those things that are really important.

2. There are hypocrites in the church.

Okay, that's true, but one more won't hurt. If the world was full of perfect people, the church would not be needed.

3. I don't have anything to wear.

Just put on your best pair of overalls or best cotton dress and get moving. Man looks on the outward appearance; God on the heart.

4. I don't get anything out of going.

As my father used to say, most folks get about as much out of something as they put into it.

5. I have to work on Sundays.

How thankful we should be that there are people providing essential services seven days a week. Nevertheless, most employers will give their employees some Sundays off, if they request it. More than that, with the marvel of

modern technology, if one is providentially hindered from being physically present at Sunday worship, he can attend online.

So, for the most part, all five of these excuses are just that, excuses.

What might Jesus say about our priorities? **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matthew 6:33).

Again, I ask, who or what is on first and second in *your* life, in *my* life?

May it be Christ alone. After all, only what is done for Christ will last. In a hundred years, all the things we worry about today, strive to get and hold onto, will be of no importance.

Returning to Jesus’ parable, the Jews assumed they were on the inside track of receiving the blessings promised to Abraham

and his descendants when in fact they were shutting themselves out. It wasn't they couldn't come to the great banquet; it was they wouldn't.

But out from this refusal by the smug and self-satisfied and pre-occupied came the extension of the invitation to all and sundry, to the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

One thing we see over and over again in the New Testament is how the ordinary people received Jesus gladly.

This category of 'ordinary' included those whom the scribes and Pharisees saw as beyond the pale: tax collectors, prostitutes, those who did not have the wherewithal to keep the letter of the Law, the broken.

Of course, these very ones were the focus of Jesus' ministry: **"I came not to call the**

righteous, but sinners to repentance,” we hear Him say in Luke 5:32.

Of course, the category of “the broken” includes all of us. **“There is none righteous, no not one,”** as Paul tells us in Romans 3:10.

But there is more. The parable does not end with this rag-tag band trouping into the great banquet hall and receiving the meal of their life. No, there are still some empty seats at the table.

So, what does the host do? He sends out his servants yet again, telling them: **“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”**

Most commentators see here a reference to the Gentiles, those outside the family of Abraham, being invited in.

This interpretation corresponds with what John says in the prologue to his Gospel: **“He**

came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:11,12)

All of which to say, the Parable of the Great Banquet is a parable of good news for those who recognize their need . . . those Jesus calls “the poor in spirit” in the Sermon on the Mount.

Everyone, no matter how checkered his past, no matter his race or economic standing, is excluded. All have a place at the Lord’s table.

At the altar rail, the banker and the wash woman, those in every sort of dress, people of different ethnic backgrounds, kneel side by side holding up their hands indicating their need for something, actually Someone, outside themselves. And they all receive the same bread and wine. No one is turned away, including you

and me. In the words of an American hymnwriter:

Jesus included me,
Yes, He included me;
When the Lord said, "Whosoever,"
He included me.

Good news. But there is something we must do. We must respond to the call of the Gospel. Out from that, we must daily hear and heed God's call to serve the poor, the halt, the maimed, those without a helper in our communities. ///

Yes, absolutely, a banquet table is a symbol of the Christian faith. We may not put it atop church spires, but it is the first thing we see upon entering the church – the table of the Lord. There we are given a foretaste of the heavenly meal that is to come.

Jesus is giving a party, and we're all invited!
Let's hit the streets handing out invitations!