

I have always delighted in being part of children's growth. When the children are little they learn to crawl, then walk, then run and jump and climb and they're off. And they have to babble, stutter, and give a word or two all the way up to composing full sentences. Children are absolutely the most generous people in the world....ready to share from all that they have so that it's more fun if others can join in the laughter too.

To watch adolescents start out in life unsure and awkward and confused to become young adults who dress well, speak well and think they can handle just about anything. Then they grow into working young adults who gain wisdom and confidence in life. It's an absolutely gorgeous conversion.

All of us are growing and changing each day, but it's especially exciting to see the transformation of teenagers. From jeans and baggy tee shirts on the kids to sophisticated shirts and sophisticated thoughts. You'll see this transformation in their generosity too: they don't share very well in middle school because they are learning to own first. Their generosity of spirit, of love, and of things grows as they can confidence in themselves and how they fit into the world God created them to share. Kids growing up never stay long at any given stage and if we together make it through one stage, then its success and fun and joy filled when we get to the next stage. Well, sometimes it is. And most often they grow into absolutely gorgeous, phenomenal adults. Just look at us!

Life is full of development steps—all signs of growth, of becoming fully human and whole. We've all gone through those different stages as young-un's, as teenagers. We go through them at different times, but we still have to walk before we run, we still are awkward before we're coordinated, we still hold tight to what we own or want before we learn to share, and we still are unsure before we're confident. I

And then I wonder if the whole process just doesn't repeat itself. Like life is one big cycle of ups and downs, of uncertainty and confidence, of stupidity and wisdom, of stinginess of spirit and things and of generosity. Like toddlers, and youth, and adolescents, you and I just don't get it sometimes. And yet at other times we do. Sometimes we know better and sometimes we'd rather just turn our backs to what. Is offered to us in life.

We all grow up. And our lives become a tapestry of our ups and downs, our joys and our hard times. No matter what rate we learn at, or how easy or hard life has been, we grow and the fabric of our lives holds us together and clothes us. The fabric we weave of our lives experience shows to others just who we are.

Growing up, or growing old, is hard. Growing old begins at birth and doesn't stop until we die. We have so many chances to 'get it', yet we turn our backs on those choices so often. That's easy to see in some of the terrible 'two' toddlers or teenagers we meet more than others. Some just 'get it' better than others.

Not so easy to see in ourselves.

Take, for example, the wedding guests in today's gospel story. The King, the big guy, gives a wedding banquet for his son. Those invited to such a feast, to such joy, did not come. They didn't 'get it'. The King, that patient, generous, party giver, called them to come a second time. Everything is ready, please come to the feast. But they didn't. They went on with everyday life

instead, one to his farm, another to his business, others turned on the messengers and mistreated them, as if it was the messengers fault that the invited weren't ready to go to the feast. So the king sent his messengers out to gather anyone in. Everyone was invited one way or another to this joyous occasion, this feast. And the good and the bad came in and put on the robes given at the door to wear, which was a custom of those days, but one person sneaks in without putting on the robe given to him. And he was caught and became speechless. He should have known better.

All are invited, but you have to respond appropriately. You go to the feast and put on the robes given out Or you get thrown out. Everyone back in those days and in that society knew that simple fact.

There's a little of each of us in those people invited to this feast. We could be the ones that receive the first invitation: come to the feast. It is prepared for you. Join in the party. But we just ignore the invitation. Like those stubborn toddlers. Or we could be those invited who just go about our daily business, putting our anger on others—it's their fault, or their problem, we can't trust others, we say, and we keep busy doing our own things and holding onto our own goods and don't accept the invitation. We're just not ready. We're fussy teenagers, centered on ourselves.

Or we could be those who realize that everyone else is invited. The feast is for all. You, me, Lou, John, Joan, all. So we respond, put on the robes we have been given and go on in to the feast. That happens on those days when we are more sure and understanding of our place in the community. But then, on other days, we could be the one who goes on in to the party but isn't willing to go along with the way we've been asked to be part of things. We say we're a guest, we accept the invitation, but we snub the way the Big Guy wants us to be there. There are just those days when we should have known better.

Could it be that this story tells us about our God who is so incredibly patient and generous that God invites us over and over again to a feast in life, to joy in life, to the gifts God has prepared for us to have. But some of us just don't 'get it'. We're all at different developmental levels of leaning to live faithfully. We're all at different ways of responding.

Faith, like life, is full of development steps—all signs of growth, of becoming fully human and whole. We all go through those different stages of acceptance of God, and God's invitation, living as God hopes us to live.

We experience the difference steps in faith at different times, but we still have to walk before we run, we still are awkward before we're coordinated, we still are unsure before we're confident, we sure are always skimpy before we generously share of our self and from our possessions to others.

It's almost like faith is one big cycle of ups and downs, of uncertainty and confidence, of stupidity and wisdom. Like toddlers, and youth, and adolescents, we just don't get it sometimes. And yet at other times we do. But no matter where we are on our growing in faith there is always the invitation to God's feast. The feast that God invites us to over and over again. The feast prepared for us and all around us.

God is not looking for warm bodies to fill the party hall; to fill this or any church. God is looking for those who will rise to the occasion of honoring the Son.

We can respond to that no matter how we're dressed, or what step in faith development we're at, because today our party robes are not made out of denim or silk or rights and wrongs.

They are made from the whole fabric of our growing, of our lives, of our loving and giving; using material God has first given us—the cloths of justice, forgiveness, loving-kindness, peace, prayer, generosity.

When we stitch them up and put them on we ARE gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous.

Imagine that, you and I, wearing robes of justice, forgiveness, loving-kindness, generosity, peace, prayer. Take a good look in the mirror when you put that fabric on. Just like God, you'll like what you see. You'll find yourself absolutely attractive and glowing!

I don't know why we would want to wear anything else.

The invitation has already been sent.

How will you answer and accept it?

And what WILL you wear? *Amen*