

Paula Cooney, IHM
Nov. 3, 2025
Romans 11:29-36/Luke 14:12-24

The Gospel reading chosen for today is incomplete without the Gospel reading for tomorrow, so I ask your indulgence as I read them as a whole.

In the liturgical calendar for today, we are offered the option to use the readings for the feast of Saint Martin de Porres. Tomorrow, the feast of Charles Borromeo is celebrated. It is not an option.

In light of the whole Gospel text that we have for today and tomorrow, this difference – an option to celebrate Martin and a ‘full feast day’ for Charles struck me as interesting – so I probed a little further.

Charles Borromeo, born into nobility, was a cardinal-archbishop of Milan in the late 16th century. He founded the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. He was a leading figure in the Counter-Reformation, well-connected to the Church of his time, serving not only from a position of authority but also in the intimate ministry to the sick and dying during the plague that ravaged the city. He is the patron of bishops, catechists and catechumens. A good and holy man, well deserving of a day to remember his life and legacy. A man who would be very comfortable at a banquet table.

Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru, in the early 17th century, an illegitimate son of a Spanish nobleman. Martin grew up in poverty. Under Peruvian law, descendants of Africans and Native Americans were barred from becoming full members of religious orders. Martin, therefore, asked the Dominicans of the Priory there to accept him as a volunteer, performing menial tasks in the monastery in return for the privilege of wearing the habit and living with the religious community. The prior finally overlooked the law and allowed Martin to take vows as a Dominican Lay Brother. To some, he was always the illegitimate son, a mulatto – unworthy to be at the banquet.

He is the patron saint of African Americans, barbers, hair stylists, hairdressers, hotelkeepers, innkeepers, interracial justice, mixed-race people, paupers, race relations and social justice. It took 26 years for the Church to recognize Charles as a Saint ... it took 123 years for the Church to acknowledge the same for Martin.

When you host a banquet, do not invite only those who can repay you. Do not take for granted that those whom you think would be glad to drop everything and come to enjoy a fine meal with you would care to come – go out and bring in everybody without sorting them out as worthy or unworthy – go and get them so that the bounty of the feast will not go to waste.

I couldn't help but ponder the times we live in, when many who have the authority to provide a banquet of good and affordable food – a banquet of welcome and hospitality – a banquet of freedom from fear and retribution – a banquet table of guests where the

conversation flows. Curiosity, not judgment, allows everyone a voice and a place at the table are not willing to do so and, it would seem, would rather leave the banquet hall empty than go and fill it with everybody.

I know that those of us gathered here pray and work for the day when such a banquet will be the reality – in our city, our country, our world. We may not have the wherewithal to make it happen, but each of us and all of us have a role to play in its becoming. It begins at our tables – our conversations – our willingness to be vulnerable and open our hearts to the others in our lives – and, yes, to go in search of them, no matter where it takes us.

Gathered in this particular space brings me to remember that this table (the altar) is a particular place where we are invited to eat.

Perhaps, like me, it is often music or art that gives me insights that resonate more clearly than the written or spoken word. I took a look at the words of some of the hymns we choose to sing as we come to partake of the bread and the wine.

- When WE gather at this table
- Come ALL you are hungry / ALL who thirst
- At this table, the last shall be first
- COME to the banquet, COME to the feast ... the greatest AND least

Invite everyone to find their own music, art, or photo that opens up the scriptures for them. These are the people of the highways and byways – all are welcome.