

The Significance of Food in the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and the *Kanyaw*

*Fred F. Antonio, Jr.*¹

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the significance of food in Matthew 22:1-14, specifically exploring parallels between the Parable of the Wedding Feast and the Kanyaw festival of the Igorot people. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach, the researcher adopts a hermeneutical spiral methodology involving the sequential steps of “See, Discern, and Act.” The research emphasizes five key themes that draw parallels between the biblical parable and the indigenous festivity. Firstly, the study highlights the importance of the invitation in both contexts. Whether it is the divine call in the parable or the cultural invitation of the Kanyaw, there is a common thread in the significance of extending and receiving invitations. Second, the celebration emerges as a significant theme, suggesting shared elements between the joyous gatherings depicted in the biblical narrative and the cultural festivities of the Igorot people.

The third theme revolves around the crucial role and preparation of food. This underscores the centrality of food in both the biblical narrative and the Kanyaw festival, shedding light on the cultural and spiritual

¹ **Fred F. Antonio, Jr.** obtained his Bachelor’s Degree in Philosophy at St. Louis University. He pursued his graduate degree at the same university and earned his Master’s in Religious Studies. Currently, he is affiliated with the University of Santo Tomas- Institute of Religion, teaching Theology courses to college students.

dimensions associated with preparing and sharing meals. The fourth theme explores the responses of those invited, drawing parallels between the biblical account and participants' reactions in the Igorot celebration. Lastly, the study delves into the social implications of the feast in both contexts. By examining how the feast influences social dynamics and relationships, the research aims to offer an inculturated understanding of the feast in the parable's context. In essence, the study provides a nuanced exploration of the parallels between the biblical narrative and the indigenous festivity, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of food and celebration in these contexts.

Keywords: *Parable, Kanyaw, festivity, Igorot, food, kosher, non-kosher, wedding feast, Jesus, Jewish, thanksgiving, ritual, garment, exegesis, mambunong, mankotom, fiesta.*

1. Introduction

Filipino celebration centers on food. Every festivity that thanks their patron saint or deities for a good harvest or for being saved from a natural disaster is highlighted with a banquet. These banquets manifest the abundance and the gratitude of every Filipino to God and showcase the camaraderie of a community. Even early Filipinos offered food to their gods to see the future or an omen to ask for signs of a great harvest. Food, for the Filipino, has been linked to religious experiences since time immemorial. Montoya (2012) said there is a need to rediscover the significance of food in religious experience. He argued that food is not “just food” and is a vital factor in spiritual experience. He focused on the significance of food in line with the Eucharistic celebration. In his open-ended discourse, he said there is more to taste regarding our Christian faith.

Food is one of the most basic human needs; it plays an essential role in our lives and our religious practices. The reality of eating and

drinking is taken up and given a new, extraordinary significance through the eyes of faith. Our daily meal can provide access to the ultimate reality and become a channel of transcendent meaning. In some respects, food is linked to spiritual purity and holiness that connects with religious identity and membership (Gwynne 2009). Korsmeyer (1999) believes one significant role of food in our life is social: in rituals, practices, and special ceremonies that knit together the communities.

Wirzba (2013) added that food is a system of communication that reveals what we believe and value about people, knowledge about things, our bodies, cultural and inherited traditions, shared time, money, and places. He gave a twofold idea about how we should understand food in a broader scope. First, food is not merely a substance; it always includes the social aspects of meal-sharing and meal preparation. Second, food reflected the sharing of life. In this, the beauty of Christ's teaching regarding the kingdom of God on earth can easily be understood. In his article "Eating in Heaven," he discussed the consummating communion as part of food related to the parables of Jesus: the great banquet. Eating is the primary way to enact connections with others, a fellowship that takes the form of a meal. It is vital for theological reflection because, in this mundane practice, people communicate, sometimes more honestly than by their verbal piety, what they believe about themselves, their world, and their God.

Wirzba (2013) argued that food is not reducible to commodity; instead, God's love made food delectable. Enriching the food on the table will respond to the consumer culture, where food is a system of communication that reveals some aspects of our identity and community. Mann (2013) challenged our food production and consumption. He said in his article that God is the source of all food and controls the weather and seasons in which food comes in due time. Likewise, we give thanks before we eat the food on the table. People are behind the food planting, harvesting, and selling the products. With this, he challenged us to eat responsibly. Webster (2013) pointed out that feeding the less fortunate is an act of self-sacrifice and emphasizes our role as Christians to feed the hungry. She said we can only overcome this problem by learning to give or share food with others.

Furnal (2011) explored the gospel of Mark, especially the meal scene, where he examined the theme of Divine Hospitality in the Old Testament. In his presentation, he said the kingdom of God is represented as a table fellowship. This is manifested especially in the times that Jesus eats with his apostles, disciples, and the outcasts of his time. Table fellowship for him is a membership open to all. Reading all these previous studies shows there are some points to address, that food is not simply a gustatory and physiological need of man. Instead, there is something more that food brings to our lives. The works mentioned above will no doubt elucidate the vastness and richness of literature about food. I attempt to explain how the Matthean text and *Kanyaw* practices are theologically explained.

Furthermore, the *Kanyaw* of the Benguet Province is a feast that exemplifies the characteristics mentioned above of food. It is deeply rooted in the life and customs of the people as a community and reflects what food brings to the people's lives. *Kanyaw* is a "festival," ceremony, liturgy, service, rite, or ritual offering. The feast is a socio-religious ceremony in which some animals are sacrificed and feasted. This feast signifies many things to the Cordilleran people. Anything that is in between life and death or even the two previous gives highlight to them. It lies in the center of the culture, tradition, or even in the life of this people, for it opens the doors of heaven to receive an omen to the gods, to share life, for crucial decisions, and for many other reasons. This feast shares parallelism with the parable of the wedding feast in the gospel of Mathew, which the researchers need to cultivate and enrich.

The Gospel of Matthew presents the Parable of the Wedding Feast as a sign of salvation through a banquet. This parable will be used as a guiding principle to develop a new perspective related to the *Kanyaw*. This gospel passage is unique in how food is presented as a symbol of the kingdom of God. The Igorots provide an excellent example of realigning and deepening the value of food, that food is more than membership in a community.

The researcher follows the developed hermeneutical spiral methodology (See, Discern, Act) that will serve as a tool for addressing the three central questions presented earlier. In the "See"

part, we will encounter the bigger picture of the history of food. The “Discerning” part will discuss how the *Kanyaw* exemplifies the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14. To begin with the parable of the wedding feast, exegetical interpretation will be used to clarify some questions about the parable. Books, articles, and interviews are used to present the significance of the study in *Kanyaw*'s cultural context. Lastly, in the “Act” part, the researcher will give the pastoral implication of the significance of food to all Christians. For some theologians, it is noteworthy that food has become phenomenological. In this sense, food has a significant impact on our daily lives.

In essence, the paper attempts to present a new perspective and re-alignment regarding the significance of food. Importance This will lead us to rediscover the significance of food, answering these questions: First, what is the relevance of food in Matthew 22:1-14 and *Kanyaw*? Second, how does *Kanyaw* exemplify the Matthean text, and third, how may the Christian community actualize the insights regarding the significance of food in Matthew and *Kanyaw* from a particular aspect of Christian Life? In addition to this presentation, some tools are needed to develop a new approach. This paper delimits itself on the significance of food in the parable of the Parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22: 1-14 and in *Kanyaw*. The exegetical approach in this paper may vary due to different translations and interpretations of the study's focus.

2. SEE: The Relevance of Food in Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and *Kanyaw*?

Looking at history, we can see the significance of food in different cultures. Scholars could trace in the daily general books of the Romans and Greeks a detailed report of when they ate, what they consumed, and how they partook of the meal (Wilkins and Hill 2006). For the Greeks and Romans, festivals brought a sense of solidarity and identity. The role of food is expounded in several Greek festivals, which brought together much of the citizen body in an affirmation of civic identity (Wilkins and Hill 2006).

The Symposium (fourth century BCE to second century CE) or ‘talk feast’ was joint in the Greco-Roman world (Raphael 1972). This is an organization of all-male groups, aristocratic and egalitarian at the same time, which affirm their identity through ceremonialized drinking. Plato’s Symposium, in which Socrates and several chosen companions, the ‘rabbis’ of ancient Athens, gather for a relaxed evening of talk, not about rivalries but on a set theme. This classical gathering generated philosophical reflection. Food and drink were served lavishly to the privileged participants at these symposia, but the talk was important (Rohrbaugh 1996).

In the Jewish culture, Jews typically ate two meals daily, whereas Greeks and Romans ate three. Pervo (1985) presents the reader not only with a clever analysis of Trimalchio, in which food was a social substance and currency. What you, the guest, are offered is a measure of your standing in the eyes of society and your host (Rohrbaugh 1996). Some literature on meals in antiquity has also been added to several specific types of meals, like the symposium, the Passover meal, and funerary meals. The Passover was an influential meal that was important to Jews and Christians and perceived and structured other liturgical events. The origin of all the rituals of Passover seems to center entirely on the events of the Exodus (12:1-28). According to Rabbi Adam (2014), what truly makes food Jewish is not who eats it, cooks it, or produces it; instead, food may be Jewish by those who value its memories, relations, and connections. *Jewish food stays in the heart of the person who shares it due to its sensory experiences and associated memories.*

Meanwhile, funerals and commemorating meals are other types that historians and interpreters of biblical text should address. Even in the Hebrew scripture, there is controversy over food offerings left on the tombs of the dead. In the book of Amos 6:1-7 and Jer. 16:1-9 and Phoenician texts, the funeral meal is called the “*marzeah*” at which guests recline to eat a banquet (Rohrbaugh 1996). Philip Kinmusic and interpretation of the banquet contains a summary: it was a meal at which one reclined, was anointed by oil, consumed a meat meal, accompanied by singing and other music, and climaxed with excessive drinking of wine. A study was made by Charles A. Kennedy (1987) of commemorative meals consumed at funeral sites. Meals

were eaten at a tomb by family and freed persons on specified days in the mild months of the year.

3. Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14

One notices some stories in the life of Jesus in the Gospel, such as how he ate and drank with the people. Jesus was even labeled a “glutton and drunkard” who ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). This constitutes an “acted parable” of God’s particular care for outcasts. And the very highlight Jesus left is the Eucharist. Jesus’ Last Supper is foremost a symposium at which He delivers a farewell address that contains primary material about new social relationships (John 13-17). One can also see the relationship between the two Gospels that has brought the kingdom of God together as a celebration. Furthermore, in Jesus’ ministries, there is a different approach to how he introduced the kingdom of God. He used various literary forms of literature to elucidate the message. One good example is the use of the parable, allegorical in a sense, yet there was its canonical rendition that gives meaning to our history of salvation (Matthew 13:10-16). In the Gospel of Matthew, one encounters the parable of the wedding feast. In this story, one can observe how Jesus delivers his message. With this, the story would come across on the relevance of food in the parable story and the Kanyaw of Benguet. The text is as follows:

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused. ⁴ Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army to destroy those murderers and burn their city. ⁸ Then he said to his

servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.⁹ Go to the street corners and invite anyone to the banquet.'¹⁰ So the servants went into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, good and evil, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.¹¹ But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man not wearing wedding clothes.¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.¹³ Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'¹⁴ For many is invited, but few are chosen.'" (Mt. 22:1-14, NAB).

Biblical exegeses on the parable are limited and are focused on: first, the genre and the metaphorical languages used; second, the appropriation during its time; and lastly, the response to the invitation through the meaning of the garment and feast.

A parable is a perspective of the world that uses a story to illustrate a truth or lesson. It shows a likeness between the image of an illustration and the object being portrayed. It defines the unknown using the known, helping the listener discover the more profound meaning and underlying truth of the portrayed reality. It can be a figure of speech or comparison, such as "the kingdom of God... is like a mustard seed... or like yeast" (Luke 13:19, 21). More commonly, it is a short story to bring out a lesson or moral. Jesus used simple stories or images to convey essential truths about God and His kingdom and lessons about the way of life and happiness God has for us. These stories often feature examples or illustrations from daily life in ancient Palestine, such as mustard seeds and fig trees, wineskins and oil lamps, money and treasure, stewards, workers, judges, homemakers, wedding parties, and children's games. Jesus' audience would be very familiar with these illustrations from everyday life.

A wedding is one of the most joyous celebrations of the Jewish people; this feast is even celebrated for a week. According to Jewish tradition, festive occasions are always marked with food. The

betrothed's parents generally drew up the marriage contract in Jewish society. The bride and groom would meet, perhaps for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple was considered married at this point, but they would separate until the actual time of the ceremony. The bride would remain with her parents, and the groom would leave to prepare their home. This could take quite a while. When the house was ready, the groom would return for his bride without notice. The marriage ceremony would then occur, and the wedding banquet would follow.

Specifically, the observance of a great *mitzvah* (covenant) is celebrated with a *seudat mitzvah* (feast), a "mitzvah repast," which should include bread, meat or poultry, and wine. Thus, participating in a wedding reception that celebrates the mitzvah of marriage is an honor and a *mitzvah* in itself. During the week following the wedding, it is customary for friends and relatives to host festive meals in honor of the *chatan and kallah*. This is called the week of Sheva Brachot, and it is about the blessings said after each of these festive meals. Additionally, wine and meat bring happiness, according to the sages. Essential sacrifice recipes in the Beit Hamikdash, the ancient holy Temple in Jerusalem, included slabs of meat and libations of wine. These foods help transform an opportunity for gluttony into an exercise in holiness.

The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a wedding banquet. The story's focus emphasizes not the preparation but the response of the people invited to the feast. Marriage, compared with the covenant, is not new in the Old Testament; in the book of the prophet Hosea, God is portrayed as the faithful husband and Israel as the unfaithful wife. In the New Testament, the Messiah is frequently described as a bridegroom, which is not unusual (see John 3:29; Eph 5:25-32; and Rev. 21:2, 9). But in terms of the parable, it is the response of Israel in sending the Messiah.

Hill (1972) emphasizes the eschatological aspect of the marriage feast in the story. He added the explanation of the wedding garment with epigrammatic logion, where he refers to a small group of Jews who are the chosen ones. It is noted that this garment is their behavior and action, indicating they are worthy or not as 'chosen

ones.’ Hence, every Christian must robe him/ herself in righteousness in words and deeds. Biblical scholars point out that this parable is also transmitted by the evangelist Luke in a slightly different form (Lk. 14:16-24). Luke merely speaks of a dinner that someone gives.

4. *Kanyaw*

Meanwhile, in some countries like the Philippines, traces of tradition that forbids particular food can be seen. Generally, Filipinos have local fiestas (feasts) and different kinds of big celebrations or Festivals; in all these events, food has become part of it. So, the fiesta became a rather lavish teaching aid and more. The missionary archives contain reports in the friars’ hands telling how they used these festivals to attract the people to church (Roces 1978). The festival is generally rejoicing and takes the form of partaking in ceremonial meals (Posner 1973). Filipino culture is not based on contradiction but on integration. As a unique entity, how do Filipinos gather and unite as one, especially during festivity?

Benguet is known to be the “Salad massive bowl of the Philippines” because of its vast vegetables. Its geographical location lies in the southernmost of the Cordillera Administrative Region, and its capital is La Trinidad. The province of Benguet has a total land area of 261,648 hectares. This province has 13 municipalities and 140 barangays, and two prominent dialects are used in this province: *Kankana-ey*, *Ibaloi*, and *Kalanguya*. The *Kankana-ey* are the indigenous people who live in the western, northern, and southeastern *Ilocos Sur*, while the *Ibaloi* mostly live in the southern part of Benguet Mountain Province. Furthermore, this province has preserved its cultural practices and traditions well. This region has caves used as catacombs, and some well-preserved mummies have been discovered. These mummies can be found in Kabayan; they are placed in capsule-shape coffins and buried in caves or on high cliffs.

Another custom is their cultural celebration of *Kanyaw* (Feast). Tumilang (2007) defined *Kanyaw* as a “festival,” ceremony, liturgy, service, rite, or ritual offering. In this feast or gathering, there must be these three components: (1) a substantial supply of food that includes,

(2) a free flow of “spirits”, preferably *tapuy* or rice wine, and (3) Igorot dancing to the music of gongs. All this to last for at least a day. *Kanyaw* is a feast, staying for at least a day, where plenty of food and drinks are served, with dancing to the music of gongs. This is also how Peterson (2010) defines *Kanyaw* in his article emphasizing dance in *Kanyaw*.

Kanyaw is a socio-religious ceremony in which some animals are sacrificed and feasted on. This is also done during marriage, healing, birth, burial, and voyage, where prayer plays a significant role. Baucas (2003) mentioned some important roles of *Kanyaw* in preventing sickness or illnesses, which can make them prosperous or progressive. It can also bring back the inhabitants of the people, especially enemies. *Kanyaw* satisfies two communal functions: (1) *it carries a reputation to the family*, and (2) it sustains and reinforces the existing social organization and extended family ties. In his survey, all five leaders fulfilled the ritual requirements by offering thirteen native pigs with white and black nails. This prestigious celebration begins with three pigs, then the second ritual requires five, seven, and so on. The *Kanyaw* plays a vital role in reaffirming the existing order and status determined in the spiritual world. It also influences the gods and spirits to maintain the existing order. In addition, the Igorots believe that *Kabunyan* and the Ancestral spirits grant fame, material blessings, and good health. Therefore, they naturally view present wealth as a reward for their religious piety expressed through many *Kanyaw* sacrifices; today’s *Kanyaw* ensures tomorrow’s blessing. It may be performed in individual homes, public places, familial, or communal (Roces 1980). They invoke the spirits with offerings of animals, food, and other materials prescribed by the *mambunong* (native priest). Within this ritual, they asked for the blessing of their ancestors and other god spirits to answer their prayers. This also validates a person’s standing in the Igorot groups.

Sacla (1987) mentioned that Benguet people believe in unseen beings emanating from the sky world and the underworld. He added this group has “apprehension or conviction of the existence of the supernatural being.” They believe spirits have power over human beings, but men can control them. They try to win the Favor of the spirits through prayers and material offerings in a ceremony. This

mentality is reflected in the celebration of the *Kanyaw*. These are two significant groups of Benguet: the *Kankana-ey*, called their feast *pedit* (rich man's feast), and the Ibaloy *pechit*.

The preparation involves the young people in the neighborhood who come to help. *Bayanihan* is still observed in this activity. It manifested how these people shared their time without expecting a fee or anything in return. This tradition demands careful preparation to avoid bad omens. Older women prepare the *tapuy* (a fermented rice wine used as wine offering in ritual). The last stage of preparation is procuring sacrificial animals like pigs (the color must be pure black), cows, and carabaos (water buffalo), free from abnormalities. Another element before the feast starts is the mediation of a *mambunong*, an indigenous priest of Benguet, administering the prescribed ritual at the feast. He is the intermediary between the spirits and man. He is the chosen spiritual leader in the community. With the *mambunong*, you will see the presence of the *mankotom* (wisemen or native elders who interpret the meaning of dreams and omens) in the community. These are composed of the wise men who are usually consulted to specify the appropriate procedure in the ritual (Sacla 1987). They also consider the movements of the moon before they complete the ritual. They can be determined by the formation of the moon and twelve seasons (12 months of the calendar), as Sacla discussed the planning and preparation for the feast. The right time to hold the feast is once the moon emerges in a half circle. They believe the moon is in progress, and the next cycle is a full moon.

At this moment, the whole community is working hand in hand together. There are tasks given to each member of the community. Men, relatives, neighbors, and friends are assigned to gather firewood for cooking and grasses needed where the butchered meat will be placed. Some are in charge of looking for black pigs and other animals needed. Community women prepare the *tapuy* (rice wine), cooking rice and root crops. The celebration will start once the *mambunong* has arrived and will signal the start of the feast. He will ask for some wine, native blankets and clothes, and old coins arranged in a basket. These are the old belongings of their ancestors, which they invoke their presence and other spirits to come.

When everything is prepared, the first pig will be butchered. The pig will pray in front of the *mambunong* before cutting an incision at the side of the pig. They use a sharpened wood stick directly to hit the heart. Then, they cut the pig and take out the bile and liver. This will be presented to the *mambunong* and *mankotom* of the community. They interpret the position of the bile and determine if the feast is a good omen. When the pig is half-cooked, the hairs are scraped, the skin surface is washed, and the carcass is split open to remove the entrails. Care is observed, especially in taking out the liver and the gall bladder. In practice called 'in-partisan,' the elder or priest will examine whether these are healthy and how these are situated as the positioning could spell good fortune for the people sponsoring or conducting the feast or otherwise. Should there be a bad omen, the elder may ask for another animal sacrifice to ward this off. They will start slicing and cooking the beef in plain boiling water.

After the long ceremony and prayers, the most awaited part is the feast-eating time. Everyone will get a slice of *watwat* (boiled meat). They will offer some to the spirits and the sick members of the community. While eating, the men prepare the musical instrument like the *gangsa* (gongs made of brass or iron by the natives themselves used to produce music during the feast) and *solibao* (elongated drums made by the natives themselves played with gongs to have music during the feast) is tuned for dancing. The community was allowed to dance, especially the hosting family. Then, the second pig is butchered for another set of thanksgiving. Butchering the third pig indicates that the feast is about to end. They believe that the ancestor going back to *Kabun-yan*. At the end of a *Kanyaw*, the guests from each region are allotted a *carabao* to slaughter and divide among themselves (Roces 1980).

5. DISCERN: How Does *Kanyaw* exemplify the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14?

The feast of *Kanyaw* can be compared to the story in the parable of the wedding feast. Narrowing down the story would make capturing the message into five aspects easier. First is the significance of the invitation or the call; second is the significance of the

celebration; third is the importance and preparation of food; fourth is the response of those invited; and lastly, its social implication.

First, there is a significant invitation in the parable and *Kanyaw*; in the parable, the king sent his slaves to call his guest. Accordingly, an invitation during a wedding feast in the Jewish context is sent personally. Only those who are close to the host are invited to the banquet. Yet upon the rejection of those first asked, the invitation became universal: all are accepted. It is a universal call to salvation. To partake in the feast that was set for all. We are called to be sharers of the salvation brought to us by Christ, the bridegroom, and God as the one who calls the banquet.

Like in *Kanyaw*, they have different ways of inviting guests and visitors. Sending personal invitations or messages is a common way to inform people, yet the tribe has an ancient method of inviting its community. The crude sound of the *gangsá* is played to remind people to assemble and that the ritual is being solemnly celebrated. The feast is a universal calling to share and partake in the feast and food with the community; although some do not heed the invitation and will not attend the said celebration, all are called to join and participate.

Second, the significance of the celebration in the parable and *Kanyaw*; the king sent out his messenger to invite the selected guests to share in their happiness in the marriage of his son. For Jewish people, a wedding is one of the festive celebrations for it relives the great *mishya* or the covenant between God and man. Yet, exegetes remind us that the parable is the celebration of salvation where Jews and Gentiles are called to partake in the heavenly banquet.

The reason for the *Kanyaw* varies in purpose and meaning. *Kanyaw* is a highlight of religious celebration. It is offered for various purposes: to celebrate as a religious, as part of a funeral rite, and to secure healing. Or others to express gratitude for a bountiful harvest, the birth of a new community member, a wedding, or just about anything worth celebrating.

Within this feast, the Igorots incorporate their ancestors and invoke other spirits to come and bless their gathering. Though it was not mentioned in the parable of the wedding feast, they invoke spirits. However, once digging more deeply into the wedding rites of the Jews, it is observed that there are the same structures as *Kanyaw*. Jewish practice has minor ceremonies before the wedding day as part of their customs. According to Schneid (1973), this practice originated from fear of the evil eye or spirits. This site is designed to protect the couple and invoke blessings on the couple aside from paying the dowry and contract between the consenting groups.

Nonetheless, the feast is nothing without a sense of belongingness; the feast is an excellent venue for knowing people and a sort of reunion for others. Furthermore, the parable story has something to do with belongingness; God still accepts us despite our weaknesses. This is how Hultgren gave his exegetical interpretation of the text.

Third, the importance and preparation of food in the parable and *Kanyaw*; Wilson (2014) has presented five phases in his book discussing how the gospel of Matthew sees the access of food: The production, distribution, preparation, consumption, and finally, the cleaning-up after the meal. This is also the reason Wilson (2014) has decided to expound further on the gospel of Matthew since he believed the scholars neglected a discussion of food practice in the Gospel. The king said calves and fattened cattle were slaughtered, and the feast was ready. Though there is only a short verse in the parable that talks about food, food preparation is essential for Jewish people. They are very conscious about which food to take; this is also highly observed in *Kanyaw*.

The history of food is further seen in the books of Deuteronomy (14: 3-20) and Leviticus (11:1-47). These books refer to specific rules about Kosher and non-kosher foods, prescribe regulations on how to slaughter the animals, and provide some types of foods. This makes sense; a culture has a set of rules to make its celebration authentic. Both feasts gather the best food: in the parable, the king has chosen his best calves and fattened cattle, prescribed by law.

Respect for the feast has its purpose and role for the Benguet people. That is why they ensure the feast is appropriately followed by the help of their *mambunong* and *mankotom* of the community. In *Kanyaw*, natives of Benguet do not simply use ordinary swine but a local domestic black pig. Once the offering of the swine has started, people gather to witness the rite. The *mambunong* will observe the bile size and position, consulting and soliciting comments from the elderly members of the community. They will determine if the bile is usual, a good omen. If they find abnormalities, they will seek comments from the *mankotom* for confirmation. As observed and interpreted, the omen is the basis for predicting the future (Sacla 1987). After this presentation, the meat will be sliced and cooked plainly in boiling water.

After a long period of preparation, there is a much-awaited part. People gather to eat and share food. Then, the highlight of a *Kanyaw* is the eating time. Each person will be served rice and slices of meat called *watwat*. They serve the internal organs of the elders. After eating, musical instruments are set for dancing. The host is privileged to dance the *tayaw* (*the native dance performed during the feast*). Then, another pig is currently being butchered.

Fourth is the response of those invited to the parable and *Kanyaw*; there are two responses people give to the invitation. The first one is the negative response of the people. It is where those whom the king invited did not respond to the call. Worst, they mistreated the messengers of the king, even to the point of killing them. The ruthless act of those who ignored the invitation and killed the messenger is a sign of their insurgency and disrespect to the host. Thus, those actions were condemned by the host, resulting in the killing and burning of their cities.

On the day of the ritual, the hosts and other relatives wake up early to prepare for the festivity. Men and women in this community have designated tasks to carry out. Men of the tribe are usually in charge of selecting cattle, pigs, chickens, and firewood, while women are busy preparing the rice wines and some utensils needed for the occasion. Women cook rice while men prepare pots, knives, and musical instruments such as gongs and *solibao*. The quantity of rice to be cooked is measured by sacks. Camote would also be prepared as

this would be offered to guests upon arrival. No coordinator is needed in such a big event. Everyone performs tasks out of his initiative – an attitude facing extinction. It exemplifies how the Jewish culture and Benguet tradition have much in familiar resemblance, especially in the book of Leviticus on how food is prepared.

The whole community shows their cooperation through *Bayanihan*. People offer their time and help without expecting fees or anything in return. The act speaks more about food because of its closeness and unity. By all means, food has transcended its daily meaning. Looking back on the experiences of *Kanyaw*, I can say this is a voluntary commitment and combined effort of its immediate community. It is a feast molded by their shared stories and experiences of joy and suffering, which makes it authentic because of their geniuses to one another. Likewise, Wirzba (2013) suggests that food carries multiple layers of our identity, including moral, cultural, ecological, and religious significance.

In contrast, as mentioned above, that initiative is an attitude facing extinction due to some people not responding to the call anymore. It is saddening that people participating in the *Kanyaw* will attend the ceremony and take their share without even helping. Others will not even interact with other people. The sense of volunteerism in the meaning of the feast is slowly fading in the new generation. Older people in the community try to preserve the tradition, but the lack of initiative and responsiveness to the call might have made *Kanyaw* history in the past.

Fifth is the social implication of the parable and *Kanyaw*; a traditional Jewish wedding meal means no one goes hungry. Plan for lots of food; leftovers can go home with guests or to a home for older people after the wedding. “Charity saves from death” (Proverbs 10:2, 11:4). A table would be, and still is, set out for poor people during the wedding meal. Their presence brought the gift of long life to the newlyweds. Poor people will not know how to get to distant wedding halls. But it’s no excuse not to think of people experiencing poverty on a wedding day. Give to *tzedaka* or charity in honor of a new marriage. It’s the right thing to do.

Furthermore, *Kanyaw* speaks more about how this feast binds and heals divisions. This does not mean that eaters are fully aware of what they do or communicate when they eat.

6. ACT: Implementing Lessons on Food Significance from the Parable of the Wedding Feast and *Kanyaw* in Christian Life Demands Intentional Action.

Food defines community; Webster (2013) stressed Jesus' principle of feeding others. Jesus redefined the traditional understanding of community when he ate with tax collectors, sinners, and Pharisees. This is how Jesus introduced the kingdom of God, where everybody is invited to the feast prepared by his Father. Webster concretizes this idea by stating that this new community does not include the family as we usually define it. Hence, it extends to the broader community. Story (2012) says that meal-setting establishes and maintains trust and solidarity. He added that this ritual shows a social relationship, and food is employed as an instrument, a sustaining or destroying mechanism of sociability. Jesus engages the host and guests with table talk, like a symposium. This should not at all be a surprise that Jesus spent much time eating with others. Jesus lets us feel that we also belong to his Father.

So that the Christian community may actualize the insights regarding the significance of food in Matthew and *Kanyaw* from a particular aspect of Christian Life, it will deal with the three facets of food in the Filipino context: First, Daily food; second, Fiesta; and lastly, the Eucharist.

First, the significance of daily meals for Filipino society: *Kanyaw* is a big meal. We can see characteristics such as the sense of belongingness, the exchange of stories and traditions, the unity, and the "Bayanihan." It is an expression of celebration like marriage and baptism, grief for the death of a loved one, negotiation for tribal war, or any other purpose it is used for. It is an activity of the community where everyone is nourished and formed. It is an identity. It is where everyone becomes one in meals and celebrations.

In the Filipino family meal, it has been customary for the family to eat together as an event or family affair. The table of food becomes the center of Filipino families. It is expected that every mealtime, every member of the family eats together. At the table, while eating, stories are exchanged, problems are solved, secrets are told, and traditions are passed on. Also, before, during, and after mealtimes, every family member helps prepare the meal. During the meal is the sharing and exchange of life lessons. After the meal, everyone benefits from cleaning up the table, yet stories are still exchanged. It is here, at mealtimes, that the sense of being a family is being nourished and molded. At the table, you can feel the sense of belongingness and the sense of community. Sadly, we can frequently see that family come together during mealtime. It became a trend for family members to eat individually. Yet the daily meal plays a vital role in strengthening a family and forming its young members.

Second, during celebrations, especially the fiestas, one of the purposes of *Kanyaw* is thanksgiving. The Igorots believe that material blessing and prosperity come from Dios Adi Kaila, Kabunyan, and the ancestral spirits. It is a thanksgiving to deities and spirits of the ancestors for a good harvest or any celebration worth thanking for. In return, the people give back to them the portion of material possessions that are granted to them by the deities. The focal point of the people's celebration is Thanksgiving. It is a way of celebration. It is a way of thanking the gods and the ancestors for blessing and guiding them through the season. It is also their expression of blessing the gods for tomorrow's blessing.

Meanwhile, fiesta in the Catholic context is also focused on thanksgiving. It is a celebration that is thanking God through San Isidro Labrador for a bountiful harvest, San Jose for his paternal protection during calamities, etc. The highlight of the celebration is the nine days of praying, and on the tenth day is the thanksgiving, often celebrated on the feast day of the saint whose intercession guided and helped them. Sadly, due to modernity, the theme of the celebration shifted from thanksgiving to social gathering or showing off. Fiestas are sometimes no longer centered on Thanksgiving but become drinking sprees, discos, and pageants. There is nothing wrong with the joyful event, but if it replaces the true meaning of the celebration, it

becomes secular rather than religious. *Kanyaw*, however, never loses its centrality in thanksgiving. We should rethink the fiestas' rationale and ask whether they are there for Thanksgiving or entertainment.

Lastly, the Eucharist is the heart and summit of the life of every Christian and the whole People of God (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11). This makes Christian belongs to Christ as they gather and participate in the Eucharistic celebration. Indeed, it makes every Christian feel the ones they share in Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Montoya (2012) challenges us to reorient our daily experience and covenant of God's gift-as-bread. The Eucharistic banquet makes it more evident that the food should not be a fetish but should primarily be offered to provide physical and spiritual nourishment.

However, in a Eucharistic celebration, Filipinos received modernized bread, which is foreign to some cultures. Some theologians and scholars would say the theology of food is deeply rooted in the food we eat and the culture to which we belong. So why can't we use our own cultural or native delicacies? This will authenticate and reaffirm how we understand the value of food we take. The natives of Benguet, in their simple meal, can unite and reunite the community. Why not apply this method in our province, city, or country? This is probably why Montoya said in his book that it is not enough to submerge oneself in preparing the Mexican Molli (a Mexican food); instead, the art is making it. The preparation takes a long time. Likewise, in *Kanyaw*, people are helping one another and listening carefully to the rites.

Henceforward, each individual is excited once they get their share during the meal. Simple boiled meat and pining (blood sausage) make their feast meaningful, not because they are present, but because the food they eat is a prayer from the ceremony. The totality of the helping hands of those who prepared makes everyone crave a piece. They feel the satisfaction of each present in *Kanyaw*. This is why the researcher emphasized the importance and the symbolic meaning of our food. Belongingness makes us feel we are secure. Moreover, *Kanyaw* has more than to offer in understanding the theology of food.

A sense of belongingness that addresses each issue they have, personal or communal, where it heals, restores, enhances, and nourishes the community's relationship. Christ's mission was to unite God's people. Probably that's the reason why he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Furthermore, Zanchettin (1997) elaborated on the parable of how the sacrament of the Eucharist is connected; God invites his people to taste his great love. With this, he challenges every Christian to participate in the liturgy actively: how do we respond to the call or invitation to the wedding feast of his son Jesus Christ? "The participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2182). A meal, especially with family and friends, particularly on an occasion of celebration, is an opportunity to deepen closeness, bonding, communion, and even union. It is an intimate occasion. Scola (2005) remarked that:

The social implications of the Eucharist action call for the Christian's contribution to building a civil society in the various cultural areas of humanity. Based on the solidarity and subsidiarity principles that form the Church's social teachings, Christians promote a civil society based on the dignity and rights of the person, especially the right to religious freedom and all intermediate bodies, the family in particular.

In short, the parable of the feast is an invitation calling everyone to robe each one in righteousness and holiness manifested in action. The likening of the Eucharist in the parable challenges every Christian to respond to the social dimension of the sacrament. It has a purpose: to worship God and reap the harvest of solidarity by living out charity, immersing ourselves in the least among us. It summons us to build the catholic community where everyone is invited and acting for God's greater glory.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, food identifies people, gives memory, and builds relationships with the people and the Divine. As Fernadez (2003) states, food mirrors Filipinos' identity. It allows self-knowledge rooted in personal experience, embodied knowledge, and memory that is personally and collectively experienced or shared. *Kanyaw* identifies the Cordilleran people of the Northern Philippines. It is a festivity that is a living memory of the people that everyone shares in the community. It is a collective effort that conforms to tradition handed down from generation to generation. It exemplifies the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew wherein it shows how both feasts showed significance and importance of food because they include the social dimension of preparing the meal, meal-sharing, and that food reflects the sharing of life thus, showing the salvific and unitive aspect of food in one's culture.

Kanyaw and the story in Matthew 22:1-14 are parables that must be lived out. It serves as an invitation to all to share not only the food but life itself; it serves as a purpose to celebrate and save life. As in the Eucharist, it is a celebration of life-giving and sharing. The food, which is Christ himself, unites and nourishes us as a Christian community and, therefore, asks us to do the same. Christ said that the grain must fall and die for it to bear much fruit (*cf.* John 12:24). We are also asked to share ourselves, especially with the poor and the needy. *Kanyaw* and the parable challenge us to be inclusive, for both (*Kanyaw* and the parable) were summoned and prepared for all without race, class, or distinction. It gives us the foretaste of the Kingdom of God that is already but not yet. A kingdom where all are summoned to be as one community, like the first Christian community that shares everything in common (*cf.* Act 2: 42-47).

In short, both *Kanyaw* and the parable are life-giving stories that breathe life into the people experiencing and living it. It is a great challenge to reflect on our Christian identity that we are bread that needs to be broken down and shared. We need to move as one community to embrace, care for, and look after our brothers and sisters who are unloved, the *anawim*. It is a challenge and a life-long mission to bear witness to Christ's life and generosity.

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