

## God expects a wholehearted RSVP to his invitations, pope says

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Nov. 5, 2013 The Francis Chronicles  
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Being on God's "guest list" is not enough for salvation; a person must respond to the offer of faith and actively participate in the life of the church, Pope Francis said.

Being a Christian means accepting God's invitation to believe in Jesus and to celebrate with the whole church the joy of being saved, the pope said Tuesday during his early morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where he lives.

The pope's homily, according to Vatican Radio, looked both at the parable in the Gospel of St. Luke about the man who invited friends to a banquet, but none of them showed up, as well as at the description in the Letter to the Romans about how members of the church each have different gifts to use for the good of all.

"A Christian is one who is invited," not to visit a shop or "take a walk," but to join a celebration, the pope said. "The Christian is one who is invited to a party, to joy, the joy of being saved and redeemed, the joy of participating in the life of Jesus.

"A party is a gathering of people who talk, laugh, celebrate and are happy," he said. "It's always a gathering of people. At least among people who are mentally normal, I've never seen someone have a party alone -- it would be a bit boring."

"The church isn't only for good people," the pope said, because "all of us sinners have been invited" and called to form a community.

A Christian cannot say, "I'll go to the party, but only to the front room with the three or four people I know," Pope Francis said. "You can't do this in the church. Either you enter with everyone or you stay outside. You can't choose; the church is for everyone, as I've said, beginning with the marginalized. It is the church of all."

It's not enough to have received the invitation, he said. "There are Christians who settle for being on the guest list" but don't show up for the celebration, and "that isn't enough."

"To enter the church means being open to what the Lord Jesus asks of us," accepting the gift of salvation and placing one's time and talents at the service of the community, the pope said.

As for those who don't RSVP right away, Pope Francis said God "understand and waits, because he is merciful. But the Lord doesn't like those who say 'yes' and then don't come, who pretend to thank him for many things, but really follow their own path, who have good manners, but do their own will and not the Lord's."

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