



SUNDAY GOSPEL

Parable of the wedding feast

MATTHEW 22:1-14

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next, he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited," he said, "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding."

But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He dispatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants,



Parable of the Wedding Feast by Andrey Mironov

"The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding."

So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look

at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen. ■

A WORD FROM
POPE FRANCIS

In this Sunday's gospel, Jesus speaks to us about the response given to the invitation from God — who is represented by

a king — to participate in a wedding banquet. The invitation has three characteristics: freely offered, breadth and universality. Many people were invited, but something

surprising happened: none of the intended guests came to take part in the feast, saying they had other things to do; indeed, some were even indifferent, impertinent, even annoyed. God is good to us, he freely offers us his friendship, he freely offers us his joy, his salvation; but so often we do not accept his gifts, we place our practical concerns, our interests first. And when the Lord is calling to us, it so often seems to annoy us. Some of the intended guests went so far as to abuse and kill the servants who delivered the invitation.

But despite the lack of response from those called, God's plan is never interrupted. In facing the rejection of the first invitees, he is not discouraged, he does not cancel the feast, but makes another invitation, expanding it beyond all reasonable limits, and sends his servants into the town squares and the byways to gather anyone they find. These, however, are ordinary, poor, neglected and marginalised people, good and bad alike — even bad people are invited — without distinction. And

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the hall is filled with “the excluded”. The gospel, rejected by some, is unexpectedly welcomed in many other hearts.

The goodness of God has no bounds and does not discriminate against anyone. For this reason the banquet of the Lord’s gifts is universal, for everyone. Everyone is given the opportunity to respond to the invitation, to his call; no one has the right to feel privileged or to claim an exclusive right.

All of this induces us to break the habit of conveniently placing ourselves at the centre, as did the High Priests and the Pharisees. One must not do this; we must open ourselves to the peripheries, also acknowledging that, at the margins too, even one who is cast aside and scorned by society is the object of God’s generosity. We are all called not to reduce the Kingdom of God to the confines of the “little church” — our “tiny little church” — but to enlarge the Church to the dimensions of the Kingdom of God. However, there is

one condition: wedding attire must be worn, that is, charity toward God and neighbour must be shown.

Let us entrust the tragedies and the hopes of so many of our excluded, weak, outcast, scorned brothers and sisters, as well as of those who are persecuted for reasons of faith, to the intercession of Most Holy Mary. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. There are two features of today’s gospel- the invitation and the response. Pope Francis, in relation to the invitation, mentions three characteristics: freely offered, breadth and universality. What do you make of these? What might be the corresponding characteristics of a ‘response’?
2. There is also a strong call to ‘go out’, removing ourselves from the centre, thus to enlarge the Church by invitation. When we enlarge something typically what’s required is that we adjust what was, re-draw the lines or boundaries, even ‘make room’ by moving a little closer. What does this look like practically for you and your Church?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Each Other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Response: *Enlarge our hearts, O God, as we become people of welcome.*

Reflect: ‘The goodness of God has no bounds and does not discriminate against anyone.’ Take some time to reflect on the goodness of God.

Closing Prayer: God of love, you invite us to go out on your behalf to draw others in. Having tasted your goodness may we go, without delay, to the ‘crossroads’ and share what you have done for us.