

15 October 2017 (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Isaiah 25:6-10; Psalm 22(23); Philippians 4:12-14,19-20; Matthew 22:1-10.

### **My banquet is all prepared, ... come to the wedding!**

The parable presented to us today has a very strange tone to it. We have a king, who very obviously represents God, who is inviting people to his son's wedding feast; yet when these decline the invitation he sends out his troops to kill them. This does not match with Jesus' image of a merciful and forgiving Father.

I think we need to allow for some explanations. Firstly, in the gospel according to Matthew Jesus is addressing this parable to the leaders of the Jews who still refuse to listen to his message. The angry tone of the parable is a way of trying to shake his listeners to change their ways and start listening. Secondly, this gospel is written after the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem in the year 70AD, and it is a reflection of the community around Matthew who believed that this devastation was caused by the Jewish leaders' lack of response to Jesus' message.

For us today it is important to see this parable as another kingdom-of-God parable. Jesus describes the kingdom as a wedding feast organised by a king for his son. Perhaps in the imagination of the people listening to this parable, this was the grandest event that could be imagined. Wedding feasts always carry with them an understanding of great festivities. Here we are not speaking of just another wedding feast, this is one organised by a king for his son. One is invited to imagine great festivity and an abundance of food and drink, probably one that lasts for a number of days. In the background we also have the book of the prophet Isaiah, in the first reading, which also speaks of a great banquet with rich foods and fine drink on the holy mountain.

The question this parable invites us to ask is: why would anyone decline such an invitation? If this is what participating in the kingdom of God looks like, how could I refuse to participate? Yet we are told that those invited to this wedding feast declined the invitation; they had other more urgent duties to attend to. Others even killed the messengers, an obvious reference to the way prophets had been persecuted by the Jewish leaders.

The king's generosity and abundance is unabated. He sends out more messengers and invites everyone in, bad and good alike! Since the leaders of the Jews refused to participate, the invitation is now opened up to all the gentiles who come in and flood the palace halls.

God continues to invite us into his kingdom; God continues to invite us to share in his life. We need to get our priorities right; this is the greatest event we could ever participate in. It is not everyday that the king's son gets married! At times we might be caught off guard and think that our own programme is more important than the kingdom of God. God will not be sending out his troops to strike us down and we can also rest assured of God's infinite mercy, but we can find ourselves left out of the kingdom because we have chosen not to participate.

The invitation is always there, God continuously invites us in. Let us make sure that we listen and participate.

Fr Mario