

## SUNDAY 28 (A) (2020)

### A) IMAGE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

- Jesus often taught by telling stories, or parables
- one of Jesus' favourite images, the wedding feast.
- in this Sunday's Gospel, he is telling the parable against his contemporaries, particularly the Jewish leaders.
- Message: he, the Messiah, is being rejected by his own people, and the Kingdom is being offered instead to the Gentiles, whom the Jews despised.
- the King in the story is God the Father, and the Son is Jesus himself.
- His wedding can be understood as a twofold celebration
- celebrating his union with human beings, when he took human flesh and was born into our world;
- and also celebrating his union with the Church, wedded forever to the new community of believers.

### B) THE FIRST INVITATIONS

- God sends out his invitations first to the Chosen People, the Jews, and the servants who carry the invitations are the prophets.
- The Old Testament has many accounts of how the prophets were ill-treated and killed because they spoke out and challenged the behaviour of their contemporaries.
- The response of the first group of guests sums up the response of the Jewish people as a whole to God's call; they responded either with indifference or with violence.
- Then comes the description of how the King reacted: in his anger he ordered the execution of those who had killed his servants and the destruction of their town.
- It strikes a jarring note in the flow of the parable, and is probably a reference to the fact that in 70 AD the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem.
- The early Christians would have seen that as a just punishment of the Jews for having rejected the Messiah.

### C) THE SECOND INVITATION

- the second invitation was extended to everyone without exception
- an indication that the new Israel, the new community of believers, was to be catholic or universal.
- There would be no boundaries, no exclusions.
- The last part of the Gospel again seems out of place, and is quite probably a completely different story, which Matthew tacked on to the first one.
- The guest who enters the hall without a wedding garment is failing to show the appropriate respect and appreciation for the hospitality that is being offered him.

- The wedding garment was something he could easily get hold of, but he had just not bothered.
- For the Jews the wedding garment was a symbol for good works
- so, in this sense too, the guest who turns up at the wedding feast empty handed is showing great discourtesy
- the early Christians would see in the wedding garment a reference to baptism, and to the special white robe which was worn by the newly-baptised.
- So this part of the parable would be seen as a warning to new converts to make sure that they really did live up to their baptismal promises, in deeds as well as in words, in reality as well as in appearance.

#### D) LESSONS FOR US?

- God is the one who has wonderful things to offer us.
- But he does not force himself upon us.
- He invites, and runs the risk of being turned down.
- We can choose not to respond, and allow ourselves to be caught up in the pleasures and troubles of life.
- Or we can respond, but only in a half-hearted way, seemingly going through the right motions but in fact living by a very different set of values, so that the outward appearances belie the deeper reality.
- But if we want to accept God's invitation, then it is only natural that we should be properly dressed.
- St Paul in one of his letters gives us a wonderful description of the proper wardrobe for a Christian:
- You are God's chosen race, his saints;
- he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience...
- Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love.
- And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.

---ooo0ooo---