

OCTOBER 15, 2017

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READING 1 [IS 25:6-10A](#)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6](#)

R. (6cd) **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**

READING 2 [PHIL 4:12-14, 19-20](#)

GOSPEL [MT 22:1-14](#)

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."

HOMILY:

We have just heard one of the most puzzling, vexing parables of Jesus, "the Parable of the Wedding Feast." In the parable, the king gives a wedding feast for his son, but the invited refuse to come. He then as king "destroys" those who refuse his invitation and then goes out into the streets to find whoever he can. In all this, Jesus is teaching about the basic human struggle to accept God's desire to lavish life in abundance on us. We want instead to go our own way, when a lavish banquet of life and love is offered, if we'll follow the way of our God. However, I'd like to focus on the even more perplexing and surprising part of the parable, the ending. There, one found on the "roads" comes without a proper wedding garment and is expelled. At first this seems the height of vindictiveness and unreasonableness. What is Jesus trying to say to us? Another story about an invitation:

Last October, a friend of mine happened upon an acquaintance of his who worked in Chicago for the Chicago Cubs organization. You might recall that last October was a rather extraordinary time for that long-beleaguered ballclub, as in 108 years of beleaguer. In the course of the conversation, the Cubs' employee said to my friend, "I'm not sure I can do it, but, if I could, would you be interested in tickets to Wrigley field for game 5 of the World Series?" My friend was okay with this possibility! You might recall that, ahead of game 5, the Cleveland Indians were leading the series 3 games to 1, with one more win needed to win the series. Game 5 was a must-win for the Cubs, with games 6 & 7 even happening being a long-shot. The next day, after some work out of his office, my friend came back to find a message from this friend, simply saying, "Call me about the tickets." You can only imagine the call-back was a swift one.

Connecting with his friend, the friend said, “I have two tickets for game 5 at Wrigley Field—the beginning of one of the most remarkable comebacks in World Series history. A staggering offer! My friend’s response to the invitation was a swift one: a resounding yes to this amazing invitation. He found himself in choice seats in the Chicago Cubs’ reserved seating sections. Imagine, however, amid all those rabid Cubs fans, my friend showed up not acting like a fan, but dressed in a Cleveland Indians jersey. Beyond the fact that he might not leave the Wrigley Field with his life, it would have been the height of insult to his hosts. Beyond the invitation, he needed to act properly once at the game. For the true fan, such behavior would be unthinkable! Today’s puzzling gospel parable is also about an invitation, the invitation to the wedding banquet of the king and then the expulsion of the improperly dressed guest. But, let’s not be fooled. This is about more than clothing in the normal sense.

For, in the Christian scriptures, clothing has a much deeper meaning than this cloth on our bodies. In St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians, chapter 3, Paul uses the image of getting dressed to speak of the proper behaviors of the follower of Jesus. He says: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. . . and over all these, put on love...” This is the essence of Jesus’ parable about not coming properly “dressed” to the banquet—that once we’ve been invited (and we all have been in our baptisms!), we still have some work to do, to properly clothe ourselves with the qualities fitting one invited. And, if we come here, and then leave here, without these as the qualities that direct our lives, it’s like saying with my actions that I appreciate the invitation, but I’ll put on the “jersey” of the other team and cheer for the other team (the one dressed in black!) and act in the manner as an enemy of Christ.

So . . . we have been invited to the wedding feast of the son of the king, which reaches its height in this Eucharistic feast, when God is wedded to humanity in the Eucharist we are given. How are we clothed when we come? Every once and a while (maybe especially during the summer), the question arises about the proper way to dress when coming to Mass. Some folks, objecting to some summer clothing will say to me: “Father, you should tell folks how to dress properly for Mass!” Okay . . . I will. When you come to Mass, the wedding feast of the Lamb, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. . . and over all these, put on love...”

But, we say, we are these things! But, in all honesty, not everyone sees us that way! As I shared a couple years ago, soon after arriving at St. Edward, I received a letter from a former parishioner with this message: “My own faith in Christ has deepened since leaving your church. I know there are many good people at St. Edward, but I am troubled by the intolerance, false outrage and sheer hypocrisy I see and hear from so many.” In the words of Jesus, this former parishioner was saying that she did not see in us persons clothed with the virtues fitting someone invited to this sacred banquet at the wedding of the Lamb. In all humility, then, we must, each of us, search our souls to see if our lives are properly clothed with the virtues fitting ones, thank God, who have been invited to this astonishing feast that weds humanity to the divine.

When the question of proper dress for Mass comes up, I hear it constantly said, “God doesn’t care how we dress at Mass, but just that we come.” Jesus’ own words contradict this claim. He does care—we must come here, and go from here, properly clothed with “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. . . and over all these, put on love. . .” The queen of all our “garments” is humility, renouncing any smug pride and presumption of one invited and striving to see where my spiritual appearance is still lacking and asking God to help me come more fully in the image of Christ. May our full and humble living of the Christian life be that appearance that draws others with joy into this remarkable wedding feast at this table to which, in God’s great mercy, we have been invited. For here, at the wedding banquet of this altar, appearances do matter.