

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

THE WEDDING FEAST

The Church's year is drawing to a close: in a few weeks we'll be very much thinking about the end of time - but today we've got a preview. The parable of the banquet is a link between the Gospels of recent weeks (which have as their theme: 'Just who is going to be saved?') and the looking forward to the end times which will follow. The big danger is complacency: we're baptised, we go to Church - we've got our invites to the wedding. But when the big day comes, will we be ready for it? Or will our thoughts be on the other things of life? Jesus speaks about himself as the Bridegroom, and today points out that the chosen people are in danger of missing the celebration. Our faith is that the Bridegroom will come again; let us be careful that the same parable is not addressed to us.

Isaiah 25:6-10

A banquet describes the blessings God wishes to bestow, not only on Israel, but on all nations. We rejoice because the Lord in whom we hoped has saved us.

Matthew 22:1-14

The Lord invites us all to his feast. Isaiah's promise is fulfilled in Jesus: through him all God's people are invited to the banquet feast of the Kingdom.

"Many are invited but few are chosen".

The marriage feast or banquet was a popular way of imagining the coming of God's reign. This parable is an allegory of current events in the time of Jesus. The host was God the Father who invited the people of Israel to the wedding of his son, Jesus. Those who rejected the host's invitation were the religious establishment. The poor and downtrodden were the common people who never believed they would get an invitation. The servants were Jesus' disciples who were mistreated and killed like the prophets before them. Angered, the king dispatched his army to burn their city (Matthew wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD). Because the privileged guests proved themselves unworthy, the invitation was sent out to the highways and byways, to the "bad and good alike" who would be separated at the final judgment. Mere acceptance of the invitation, however, did not guarantee participation in the banquet. Guests at a wedding banquet would be expected to appear in clean clothing. When the king saw a man who was not dressed appropriately, he had him ejected from the banquet hall. Being a Pharisee or a chief priest held no more advantage than being a despised tax-collector or prostitute.

Reflection



NOT PROPERLY DRESSED

About 40 miles east of Rome you come to the mountains around Subiaco, the region to which a young Saint Benedict withdrew to live in solitude and contemplation around 500 AD. An older hermit showed him a cave high up on a cliff and there he remained until, drawn by requests of other people, he emerged to start the present monastery at Subiaco and found the Benedictine order which went on to civilise Europe.

That original cave can still be seen within the walls of the precariously perched priory that was built around it ages ago. It has been incorporated into a series of three ancient chapels. There are extraordinary frescoes which cover every square foot of wall and ceiling.

The monks who created these chapels were not content just to hear the Gospel.



They wanted to see it happening all around them. And so they painted the walls and ceilings with splendid impressions of Gospel events. The upper chapel portrays the whole climax of Christ's life, from his entry into Jerusalem, the kiss of Judas, the flight of the disciples, his Crucifixion, the meeting with Mary Magdalen in the garden, His confrontation with doubting Thomas, to His ascension into heaven. There it is in reds, blues, purples, silver, and gold. And then there are iconic images of Mary and the saints. In the lowest chapel, there's even an image of Saint Francis (left), painted from life when he visited the place in 1223. It's

tucked behind a corner at shoulder level and when you stumble upon it in all your vulnerability, his wide open, gracious eyes look right into your soul.

One pilgrim: "Standing there amidst all that beauty dressed as I was in the khaki trousers, sports shirt, and hiking boots – the standard American tourist, gear, there came to my mind that Gospel about a wedding feast and I expected someone at any moment to approach me like the king in the parable and ask, "My friend, how is it you came in here not properly dressed?"

And I thought, "Gosh, I've got to acquire a change of wardrobe. Not perhaps literally but spiritually. I've got to divest myself of all the sourness and whining and grinding of teeth, the resentments, anxiety, excuses—the things that perpetually mute my beauty.

I've got to get more joy, faith, love, vision, grace—in a word—more beauty into my life if I am ever to become eligible to enjoy the world of Christ so beautifully reflected here within this 'Sacro Speco' of Subiaco."



"Invite everyone you can find to the wedding."

WORDSEARCH

D	E	S	I	L	E	N	T	E	D	KING	FEAST	WEDDING
G	A	R	M	E	N	T	E	O	E	BANQUET	OXEN	BUSINESS
N	S	S	E	N	I	S	U	B	T	FURIOUS	UNWORTHY	GARMENT
I	B	S	T	E	R	N	Q	R	I	SILENT	FEW	CHOSEN
D	I	W	U	X	W	E	N	E	V			
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