

28th Sunday (A)

- I'm reminded of a wedding feast I attended as a young priest after celebrating the marriage ceremony.
- Having been to plenty of wedding receptions, I've learnt that they're not always the best places for deep conversations.
- Between the loud music, a few drinks & people concentrating on enjoying themselves, serious discussions can be difficult, but on this occasion, I found myself talking with an interesting young man who was genuinely interested in understanding me & why I had become a priest.
- At the time, I was particularly interested in Liberation Theology, which grew out of the struggles of poor & oppressed people in Latin America.
- It understood salvation not simply as a promise of heaven after death, but as a call to work for justice, dignity & freedom in this world.
- I told him that one day I hoped to work as a priest in Latin America, where I might serve communities living in poverty & learn from their experiences.
- Needless to say, that never happened! But his response made me think.
- He suggested that people living in poverty & oppression might sometimes be more conscious of their need for God & more attentive to God's presence in the small things of life, & in a relatively comfortable society like ours, he said, we can become so absorbed in our opportunities, possessions & ambitions that we scarcely recognise our need for God.
- His observation has stayed with me.
- It is remarkable that Christianity began among people who were largely on the margins of society: fishermen, tax collectors, women & ordinary Galileans - they were not the powerful or influential people of their day.
- Yet they were among those who recognised something life-giving in Jesus & responded to his invitation.
- In today's Gospel, Jesus describes the kingdom of God as a wedding feast.
- The invited guests make excuses - some are preoccupied with their businesses; others simply refuse to come; so the invitation is extended to people in the streets, including those usually overlooked or excluded.
- The message is confronting - those who assume they have everything they need may fail to recognise the invitation when it comes.
- Meanwhile, those who know their vulnerability & need may be more open to the generosity of God.
- The kingdom of God is not simply a place we hope to enter after death; it is a way of living in which God's dream for humanity becomes a reality: relationships marked by justice, compassion, reconciliation & mutual respect.
- And notice how Jesus describes it - not as a courtroom, a lecture or an examination, but as a banquet, a celebration, a wedding feast!
- God invites us into the abundance & joy of life-giving relationships.

- Christianity is not meant to be a gloomy exercise in giving things up, but a way of discovering what makes life truly meaningful.
- Of course, the things that distract us are not necessarily bad in themselves.
- Work, family responsibilities, financial security & the ordinary business of life all matter, but we can become so busy making a living that we forget to make a life; we can spend so much energy managing our responsibilities that we lose sight of the people, relationships & deeper values that give our lives meaning & purpose.
- There is, however, another troubling detail in the parable.
- Among those who eventually attend the feast, one person is thrown out because he is not wearing a wedding garment. It seems harsh, particularly when the guests have been gathered from the streets.
- Perhaps Jesus is reminding us that accepting God's invitation requires more than simply turning up.
- It calls for a transformation of who we are & how we live.
- The wedding garment can be understood as a symbol of the new life we are invited to put on: the life of Christ himself.
- As Paul expresses it, we are called to "put on Christ".
- We cannot genuinely accept the invitation to God's kingdom while refusing to let the values of Jesus shape our attitudes, relationships & decisions.
- To put on Christ is to become more like Christ; it means allowing the Gospel to change not only what we believe, but how we behave.
- It's not about earning God's love or meeting some impossible standard of perfection - God's invitation is generous, & God's grace makes transformation possible, but grace invites a response - we are welcomed as we are, yet we are also invited to become something more & who we're capable of being.
- Jesus consistently reached across the boundaries that separated people.
- If we want to share his banquet, we need to learn to do the same.
- May we remain attentive to God's invitation amid the busyness of our lives.
- May we have the humility to recognise our need for God, the generosity to make room for those who are excluded, & the courage to put on Christ through the way we live.
- Because the wedding feast is not simply a promise of joy in some distant future.
- It begins whenever we allow God's love to transform us & make our world a more inclusive, compassionate & life-giving place.