

Theme of the Week - Invite everyone

The wedding banquet is a commonly used image for the kingdom of God in both the Hebrew and the Christian traditions. The feast symbolises abundance provided by God for all who accept the invitation. Jesus is teaching that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone not only the Jewish people.

Can you remember your favourite birthday party? Did you help get things ready? Was it lots of work? Imagine how you would feel if, after all that effort, the friends you invited didn't turn up? Jesus tells us this story today about a wedding banquet that the invited guests were not interested in.

A banquet is a big feast. You would need to do a lot of work to prepare a banquet for all your guests. A Jewish wedding celebration would often last as long as a week. The King in the parable is spending lots of time and effort in preparation for this wonderful celebration. However, for those invited, the commitment to give such a length of time to have to participate in may make their refusal a little easier for us to understand. Having to give a week over to celebrate a wedding might be too big a commitment for some, so for the guests they decide not to commit. Once the King sees that no one is interested he sends the servants out once again with the message, **"Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet."** Still the King was ignored - some went instead to their farms and businesses and others seized the servants, mistreated them and killed them. The Jewish people of the time were the first guests. When we reflect on this part of the Gospel, we must pose this question - *do we always acknowledge what is given to us and do we show how grateful we are for this?* The reaction of the king was rather extreme, however it relates to the Gospel we read last week where the servants and the land of the vineyard were killed and destroyed by the tenants. The Kingdom of God was abused by the tenants and they had no respect for the owner even when the keystone was presented to them!

The invitation issued in today's Gospel is one from God to the Jewish people of the time and is one of rejoice and celebration in the Kingdom of heaven but it was ignored and taken for granted. This wedding banquet of today's Gospel is only extended to all (the gentiles) once the elect have lost their chance to participate. The reference to the 'cross roads in the town' in the Gospel where other guests are invited from indicates the places where people traditionally gathered and worshipped. However, in the theme of the week for generosity a few weeks ago, it was also the place where the landowner went to find more workers. *'Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage".'* Those same people were those who were either not Jewish or did not believe in God - the market place had anyone in it but they were still invited!

The wedding feast and the symbolism of the meal are significant for Christians because of the Eucharistic connotations. The meal of bread and wine that Jesus shared with his disciples, and which we share in the Eucharist, is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet where there will be an abundance for all who accept the invitation. Recall instances when you have refused invitations and the excuses you have used to avoid going somewhere you did not want to. What excuses do you make today for not doing things that you ought to do? Can you identify what invitation God extends to you today? What sort of commitment is required for your acceptance? What are the things that prevent you from responding fully to this invitation?

Remember, ***'For many are called, but few are chosen.'*** How will you answer your invitation this week to live out the word of God?

Invite everyone

Weekly Reflections
15th October 2023



A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (22:1-14)

Jesus began to speak to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Prayer for the Week

Dearest Father, in prayer you have invited me to be in your presence. Allow others to experience your presence through my kindness and words so we are always surrounded and permeated by your everlasting love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen

Saint of the week

St Teresa of Avila



15th October 2023

Teresa of Avila was one of the most remarkable saints of the 16th century, a Spanish Carmelite nun and mystic who raised devotion and poverty, centred on absolute obedience to God, to a new extreme. She not only founded the Discalced (or barefoot) Carmelites but also established 17 convents across Spain. She was:

Faith-filled and Hopeful

Day 1

How did the king feel when the guests didn't turn up? (furious) What did he do? What do you think Jesus meant when he told this story? (Jesus wants us all to be with him and **celebrate together**. There is a place in heaven for each one of us.)

Day 2

The invitation to the banquet was extended to everyone - we are all invited! How this week can you show Christ in you and accept God's invitation of living out the word of God?

Day 3

The Sorrowful Mysteries

During this day please pray the Rosary as we enter the mysteries of Christ's suffering and death which he had to undergo for our salvation