

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Eph 1:17-18

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 22:1-14; L142A

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.

Reflecting on the Gospel

What child can refuse a dare? Maybe a few. A double-dare? Even fewer. A triple-dog-dare? None. Often a great deal of bravado accompanies a dare, but by the time the goading gets to a triple-dog-dare, there can be no backing down. For the third Sunday in a row Jesus seems to be purposely goading "the chief

priests and elders of the people" into angry retaliation for his words of judgment. Jesus is relentless in the message of these parables because of what is at stake: living in the "kingdom of heaven," receiving a judgment for fullness of Life, sharing in the divine wedding feast. Actually, Jesus is purposely goading all of us—not to angry retaliation in response to his judgment, but to change our lives so that we might embrace Life itself. "Many are invited." Only those who respond appropriately "are chosen." Our very Life depends on it.

Jesus issues each of us a triple-dog-dare. This dare we cannot refuse. We are to embrace conversion of life and choose to believe in him and come to his wedding feast. We are all invited guests. Sometimes, though, we do refuse the invitation like those in the parable invited to the wedding feast of the king's son. Despite Jesus' goading, we sometimes refuse the dare and say no to the invitation.

The scandal of the refusal of our King's invitation indicates why sin (the refused invitation is a metaphor for sin) is so damaging (both the sin of those to whom Jesus is speaking in the gospel and our own sin). We, too, are invited to God's feast because we share a special, loving, covenantal relationship with God. Sin is our refusal to share in God's feast and Life, and this refusal damages our own relationship with God as well as each other. A refused invitation is not simply a missed opportunity for a fine banquet. A refused invitation is a weakening in the relationship between host and guest. Like the wedding feast the king puts on for his son, God's banquet will be served, too, and places are reserved for us. Will we come? Will we accept the divine triple-dog-dare to live in such a way that one day we will share in the fullness of Life God offers and sit forever at the eternal wedding banquet of love?

Living the Paschal Mystery

Even when we refuse to come, our King continually sends out invitations to us. God is relentless in calling us to live in the "kingdom of heaven" and participate in the divine wedding feast. This reminds us of how much God wants to share divine Life and salvation with us. God sent the only Son to live among us and bring us salvation, even at the risk of the Son being killed. God's banquet of Life is worth any cost to God. It ought to be worth any cost to us.

While none of us would be so foolish as to refuse, for example, an invitation to a state dinner at the White House, we do often refuse God's many invitations that are far more important. We are invited, for example, to the eucharistic feast every Sunday. We come, but do we truly participate in this banquet? We are invited to a feast of generosity through many opportunities to share our gifts with others less fortunate than ourselves. Do we willingly donate time, energy, resources to others? We are invited to a feast of relationships within family, workplace, neighborhood. Do we share our values and spirituality with others? Which is the feast we choose? Will we come?



*Continued in Appendix A, p. 298, or
Matt 22:1-10 in Appendix A, p. 298.*

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: chief priests and elders of the people, kingdom of heaven, invited guests, refused to come, feast is ready, Many are invited, few are chosen

To the point: For the third Sunday in a row Jesus seems to be purposely goading “the chief priests and elders of the people” into angry retaliation for his words of judgment. Jesus is relentless in the message of these parables because of what is at stake: living in the “kingdom of heaven,” receiving a judgment for fullness of Life, sharing in the divine wedding feast. Actually, Jesus is purposely goading all of us—not to angry retaliation in response to his judgment, but to change our lives so that we might embrace Life itself. “Many are invited.” Only those who respond appropriately “are chosen.” Our very Life depends on it.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The first reading identifies what is given to those who look to God for salvation and come to the divine feast: rich abundance, freedom from death, an end to all tears, everlasting joy. To this Jesus adds that while everyone is invited, each must choose to come.

to experience: On special occasions we hire caterers who charge by the plate. When guests don’t show up, the host or hostess is charged nonetheless and suffers a loss. When we refuse to come to God’s banquet, the loss is not God’s, however, but ours! And what a loss!

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Psalm 23 celebrates the covenant relationship we share with God. The verses sing of all that God constantly does for us—shepherd, guide, protect, nurture. The refrain is our promise to accept God’s offer of Life and to live always in God’s Presence. Yet the gospel relates two stories in which persons choose not to accept God’s invitation to fullness of Life. Despite all that God offers us, despite how profusely and repeatedly God makes the offer, we can and do say no. We know from personal experience how real and repetitive our refusal can be. We know from the readings and psalm how persistent God will be in inviting us to new Life. May our singing of the psalm refrain truly be our promise always to say yes.

to psalmist preparation: The refrain for this Sunday’s responsorial psalm can be seen as both a promise on God’s part and a pledge on your part. In what area of your life is God calling you right now to keep your pledge to live as one who belongs to God’s house?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- Jesus goads me to . . . I respond by . . .
- The King’s invitation to the wedding feast comes to me when . . . by . . . for . . .
- To come to the divine feast, I must choose to . . .

PRESIDERS

My manner of living and ministering reveals that I am already living in the “kingdom of heaven” in that . . .

DEACONS

Serving others is an invitation for them to . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

I am the joyful welcome to God’s feast when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music making helps the assembly savor God’s feast more fully when . . . it hinders their feasting when . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My faithful service at the altar helps me enter into God’s feast more fully when I . . .

LECTORS

My preparing God’s word is “a feast of rich food and choice wines” (first reading) for me when . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My manner of distributing Holy Communion adds greater joy to the feast when I . . .

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 15, 2017

Gospel (cont.)

Matt 22:1-14; L142A

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.”