

XXVIII ORDINARY TIME– 11th October 2020

INVITE TO THE WEDDING FEAST AS MANY AS YOU FIND

Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Matthew 22,1-14

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servant¹ to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The parable of the murderous tenants unleashed the anger of the high priests and Pharisees who, writes the evangelist, “.. perceived that he was speaking about them.” (Matt, 21,45) No sign of repentance or conversion, but they try to catch him out to eliminate him. Well, faced with this threat Jesus not only does not hold-back, but increases the dose with the third and last parable with which Jesus argues with Jewish authorities. These three parables progressively develop the underlying theme: denunciation against the highest religious authorities who show themselves to be refractory and hostile to God's plan. In this parable Jesus tells what the reason is for this hostility: convenience and interest.

Let's hear Matthew's gospel chapter 22, 1-14. “ And again Jesus spoke to them...” so again to the high priests, the elders and the Pharisees saying “..in parables, The kingdom of heaven...”it is important that Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven and not the kingdom in heaven. He is not speaking of the after life, but of the new society, an alternative society that God wants to begin on earth.

“The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,..” Once again Jesus refers to a father and a son and this time he compares the kingdom of heaven, that is, the kingdom of God, this new alternative that he came to propose, with the most wonderful and joyous celebration that there is in the life of individuals, a wedding feast.

“..and sent his servant^t to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.” Well, the king is not discouraged, he sends other servants and now we understand the reason for this refusal because it is strange that they refuse to participate at this wonderful and joyous feast *‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’* Trying to attract them with the most attractive aspect of the feast, a big meal. In times of great hunger and misery they expected the wedding to gorge themselves. *“But they..”* says Jesus *“..paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business..”* They refuse the proposal of the kingdom for their own interest.

Jesus unmasks the attitude of the leaders of the religious institution that everything they do is for your own convenience. Attending a wedding dinner is not productive, a proposal of life, is not convenient and they respond with one of death. *“..while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.”* this is the lot of the prophets sent by the Lord. So to a proposal of fullness of life, like the wedding, they respond with the fullness of death.

“The king was angry, and he sent his troops..” and here Jesus uses the language of the prophets, the colorful language and is announcing what the fate of Jerusalem will be; Jerusalem that kills the prophets, who sowed violence, will be overwhelmed by violence. *“The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.”* It is what will happen to Jerusalem.

But here is the positive part. *“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore..’* and here the translation is important; the translation I have on hand says *“..to the main roads..”* These are not *main roads*, the Greek term used indicates the final point of a territory where the urban roads ended and the country paths began. It was the final point of the territory, the beginning of other territories. So Jesus in this parable puts these words in the king's mouth to go to the outskirts, where the excluded and marginalized live. It is an indication that the evangelist gives to the missionaries to know where to direct their preaching, going to the suburbs, where there are marginalized and rejected people

“...invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ Everyone, there is no longer a chosen people, but a universal call *“And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found,..”* It's interesting that Jesus speaks first of evil and then of good. There is no judgment, God's love is offered to all. God's love is not granted as a reward for people's merits, but as a gift for their needs, so bad and good.

“So the wedding hall was filled with guests. “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.” The garment in the new testament, in the book of the Apocalypse, indicates the works, the good works of people. And the king reproaches this person that does not have the garment, of which we now will see the meaning. *“ And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.”* What is the meaning. It is not enough to enter the banquet hall, the invitation is open to all, but once inside, you need to change. Jesus puts conversion as a condition for belonging to the kingdom of God. To a society based on the values of having, gaining and commanding, Jesus offers an

alternative possibility of a different society, where there is sharing, giving and serving. This is the garment, so it is not enough to enter, but you have to change. *“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”* Using images typical of the colorful language of the prophets of the Scriptures, Jesus speaks of the frustration at the loss of a unique opportunity in one's life. *“For many..”* meaning all *“..are called, but few are chosen.”* God's love is for everyone, but unfortunately there are few people who welcome it fully.