

INVITE TO THE WEDDING FEAST AS MANY AS YOU FIND – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Mt 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 servants 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. 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 tenant killers fired the ire of the high priests and the Pharisees, writes the evangelist, they understood that it spoke of them. No sign of repentance, nor of conversion, but they try to capture Him to eliminate Him. Well, in front of this threat Jesus, not only does not recoil, but goes further with a third and last parable, with which Jesus criticizes the Jewish authorities. These three parables progressively develop the basic theme, to complain against the highest religious authority that shows refractory and hostility to God's plan. In this parable, Jesus explains the motive of why this hostility: as profits and interests.

So let us listen to Matthew's Gospel, ch. 22, 1-14. Jesus began to speak to them, to the High priests, the elders and the Pharisees, with parables. "*The kingdom of heaven.....*" it is important

that Jesus talks of the kingdom **of** heaven, and not the kingdom **in** heaven, He is not talking of the afterlife, but of the new alternative society that God wants to bring about on this earth. *"..may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,"* Again He turns to the father and son and this time compares the kingdom of heaven, this new alternative that He came to propose, with the most beautiful and joyous feast in the life of any individual, the wedding feast. *".....sent his servants 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 can understand the motive of this refusal. It is strange to refuse an invitation to a beautiful and joyous feast.

"..he said to his servants, '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.' He tries to attract them with the most attractive part of the feast, the great wedding dinner. In the time of great famine, or great misery, one waited for a wedding to overeat. But Jesus said: *"But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,."* They rejected the proposal of the kingdom for their own interests. Jesus will unmask the behavior of the religious institution that all they do is for their own profits. To attend a wedding dinner is not productive, not convenient and to a proposal of life, they reply with one of death. *"while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them"*.

It is the fate of the prophets sent by the Lord. *The king was angry, and he sent his troops...."* and here Jesus uses the language of the prophets, a colourful language and is announcing what will be the fate of Jerusalem, that kills its prophets and has shown seeds of violence and will be overwhelmed with violence *"...and destroyed those murderers and burned their city,"* It is the sort of thing that happens in Jerusalem. But here is the positive part. *"....he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Now go out :..'"* and here the translation is important, it is written *"...to the street corners..."* but it does not mean the street corners. The Greek word indicates the confine of the territory, where the Roman roads ended and the country lanes began, the beginning of another territory,

So, Jesus in this parable makes the king say these words, go to the suburbs, this is what it means. The suburbs are where the excluded and the emarginated live. It is an indication that the evangelist gives to the missionaries to know where to orientate their preaching. Go to the suburbs, for there are the emarginated and refused people *"...as many as you find.."* Everyone, there is no elect people anymore, but a call to all the universe. *"And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found,;..."*

It is interesting that Jesus speaks first of the bad guys and then the good ones, it is not a judgment, the love of God is offered to all. God's love is not given as a prize for the merits of the person, but as a gift for all their needs. *".. 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. .* The apparel in the New Testament and in the Apocrypha indicates the good works of the person, and the king scolds

this person that does not have the right apparel , now let's see the significance. *'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 into the room of the banquet. The invitation is open to all, but once entered there is a need for change. Jesus has put the conversion as a condition to belong to the kingdom of God. To a society based on its value of having, of social climbing and of commanding, Jesus offers an alternative possibility of a different society where there is sharing, humility and service.

This is the apparel, so it is not enough to enter, there is a need of 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" It is the typical colourful language of the prophets of the scriptures; Jesus speaks of the frustration of the loss of the unique opportunity in one's own life.

The conclusion: *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* for many means all. The love of God is for all ,but unfortunately there are few people that gain the fullness.