

The 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Mike Bayard S.J.

No shoes, no wedding garment, no salvation.

Could this sign have been placed at the front entrance of the banquet hall that one joyous evening when the guests streamed through the vestibule into the banquet hall to take their seat at the table? Most everyone that arrived that evening for the party came properly attired except for the one person we hear about in the story. It seems this unlucky fellow slipped through the vestibule improperly dressed either because he did not see the sign and know of the dress code or because he thought he could get away with it, that is not being dressed properly.

Unfortunately, for him, he could not hide from the host. Upon entering the great hall, the host immediately saw the improperly attired man and proceeded to have him thrown out of the banquet hall. One can still hear the echo of his servants voices as they throw him out, “Hey buddy, next time remember, “No shoes, no wedding garment, no service!” Yet, the host’s behavior I still find disturbing considering he invited all the banquet feast.

Why invite people to the banquet if you are going to reject them? Were not all called and welcome? It makes sense that those who were invited and blatantly rejected the king’s initial invite would not be part of the banquet. They chose otherwise. But, here is this man, who heard the invitation, standing in the banquet room and the king comes in and kicks him out because he has not met the dress code.

One reason for his immediate expulsion may lie in the fact that guest did not pick up the proper attire when entering the wedding hall. It was commonplace in this culture for the wedding host to provide wedding garments for those who did not own any. It seems this one particular guest for one reason or another failed to coop-

erate with the wedding host’s proper attire policy, hence his expulsion. He had his chance.

This is sobering. Considering this week’s parable helps to illustrate who is in and who is out of God’s kingdom. I do not know about you, but I am left wondering now if I am dressed properly or have I somehow missed the sign at the entrance with the dress code policy.

So, what about us, are we appropriately attired to reach the kingdom of heaven? All are invited to the God’s Kingdom — the place of choice wines and rich food, a place where death has no power and all are gathered as one — yet few are chosen. We receive that invitation when we are baptized into Christ. The real scrutiny comes when we are asked to live out our baptismal identity. Our identity — we are a people claimed by Christ. And outward appearance symbolized in the white garment we wear on our baptismal day says it all. We are to be like Christ. It is not enough to be clothed in that garment. We are to live out our lives worthy of that garment — namely to love as Christ loved. Wearing that garment we have numerous responsibilities to live our life according to the model of Christ who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, housed the homeless, listened and stood by those suffering, speaking the challenging word to bring about an end to hate and gather all into union with Christ.

We are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved. Therefore clothe yourselves with compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Let us remember we have put on the garment of Christ and continue to live our lives as Christ as invited us to.

Remember, no shoes, no wedding garment, no salvation!

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 25:6-10

Philippians 4:12-14

Matthew 22:1-14

October 12, 2014

靈 修 生 活

常 年 期 第 廿 八 主 日

阿爾貝·范諾怡樞機主教

在今天的彌撒中和我們談了另一個比喻：婚宴的比喻。取自依撒意亞先知書的第一篇讀經為這個主題鋪了路，因為它的內容談的是天主的宴席。在第二篇讀經中，保祿向斐理百人說，天主必以祂豐厚的財富，在基督耶穌內，滿足他們的一切需要。

天主為人所定的計劃是一個充滿了愛和共融的計劃，透過擺設宴席的情形表達出來。聖經中常用宴席的景象來告訴人們天主賞賜的共融和豐盛恩典帶來的喜樂。

依撒意亞這樣形容天主的計劃說：「上主在這座山上(西雍山)，要為萬民擺設肥美的盛宴。」因此，天主邀請萬民，絕無限制和區分。那是一個「美酒的盛宴，肥甘是精選的，美酒是醇清的。」不能想像比這更美好的了。隨後，先知用另一個方式來表達天主這慷慨的計劃。天主的用意是要停止人們因恥辱而來的悲傷。先知說：「在這座山上，你要撤除那封在萬民上的封面，那蓋在各國上的帷幔。」天主看到世界上的情況惡劣，祂願意所有的人都能生活幸福，敬愛祂，並與他人相親相愛；因此，祂的計劃是要永遠消除死亡，擦乾每一個人臉上的眼淚，將祂的人民的恥辱除去。這一切激起我們向天主高唱感恩之歌：「看！這是我們所依賴拯救我們的天主；這是我們所依賴的上主；我們要因祂的救援鼓舞喜樂。」這樣，天主的計劃便完成了。

耶穌的比喻則說了人們回應天主邀請赴祂的宴席的態度。耶穌這樣說：「天國好比一個國王，為自己的兒子辦婚宴。祂打發僕人去找被邀請的人來赴婚宴。」被邀請的人指的是猶太人民。因為天主計劃的對象首先是這個民族，祂揀選了他們，並願意賜給他們豐厚的福祉，使他們生活在豐盛、幸福、共融中。

但那些被邀請的人卻不肯前來赴宴。國王於是派別的僕人去請他們，國王說：「看！我已經預備好了我的盛宴，我的公牛和肥畜都宰殺了，一切都齊備了，你們來赴婚宴吧！」天主這樣的再三邀請，正顯出祂的慷慨心懷。

然而，被邀請的人卻鄙視祂的邀請。這樣的反應令人難以相信，卻真的存在。天主把許多的恩典、喜樂推薦給我們，我們卻常常輕視祂的提議，顯出對其他事物更有興趣。各人到自己的田裡去、各人作自己的生意，對天主的計劃卻毫無興趣，但其實，天主的計劃才是所有事物中最美好的。而人卻在次要的、與他的心靈不相稱的事物中尋找滿足。其實，人的心靈是為了偉大的事物而創造的，不可將之局限於私人的利益中。

國王的邀請甚至還遇到被邀請者的敵對和侵犯性的反應：「其餘的甚至拿住祂的僕人，凌辱後殺死了。」這樣的反應也同樣令人難以置信：慷慨的邀請竟然引起了侵犯的舉動！被邀請的人把這邀請看作是闖入他們個人生活的舉動。

在這個情況下，國王必須有所行動：祂派遣軍隊去懲罰這些兇手。比喻中說：「焚毀了他們的城市。」這是對耶路撒冷城被燒毀的先知性話。這些人拒絕了天主的邀請，因而受到大遭難的蹂躪。耶穌在福音中對耶路撒冷說：「我多少次願意聚集你的子女，如母雞聚集自己的雛雞，在牠翅翼下，可是你們偏不願意。看吧！你們的房屋必給你們撇下。」(路十三 34-35；瑪廿三 37)

接下來，是比喻的第二段。國王不願放棄祂的慷慨的計劃，因此派遣僕人去邀請另一批客人，他們原先不在邀請之列：「婚宴已經齊備了，但是被邀請的人都不配。如今你們到各路口去，凡是你們所遇到的，都請來赴婚宴。」在這裡可以看到，由於原先被邀請的人不肯赴宴，結果婚宴的邀請範圍擴大，所有的人都被邀請，連那些最窮困潦倒的人也不例外。這是在耶穌死而復活後向外邦人宣講福音的預象。僕人於是將所有遇到的人都召集了來，大廳中擠滿了參加宴席的人。隨著，福音向我們展示了受邀的人如何才能恰當地接受這個邀請。國王進入大廳來看參加宴席的人，祂看見其中一人沒有穿上婚宴的禮服。參加婚宴必須穿恰當的禮服，國王肯定已經為客人準備了禮服。然而，一名客人卻不肯穿上，國王對他說：「朋友，你怎麼到這裡來，不穿婚宴禮服？」那人卻不回答。國王於是命令僕人把他綁起來丟到外面去。耶穌用這個比喻來警惕我們。天主慷慨的邀請，我們根本不配，但天主也賜我們恩寵，使我們稱得上接納天主的邀請。天主賜予的恩寵要潔淨我們、聖化我們、使我們能夠真正擁有必須的條件，來在喜樂和幸福中參與天主的共融。如果我們不接納天主的邀請，我們便會被排斥在宴席之外，更好說，我們因為抗拒天主的恩寵而令自己不能參加宴席。天主對我們慷慨大量，但也需要我們與祂合作。天主無法潔淨一個拒絕祂的恩寵，反而喜愛邪惡、反叛不羈的人。祂需要我們對祂忠心、順從，這樣，才能以聖寵充滿我們的心靈。我們祈求天主協助我們真正穿上聖寵的禮服，這樣我們才能領聖體。教會提醒我們，如果我們犯了大罪，必須先辦告解聖事，潔淨自己後才能領聖體。我們必須有天主的聖寵，才能接納天主全部的愛。在今天的彌撒中，我們領悟到有這樣的需要。但我們更應該仰慕天主的慷慨心懷，祂不僅邀請我們赴宴，還通過告解聖事為我們提供參加婚宴的禮服。這樣我們什麼都不缺了，我們只需要懷著順從的心，隨時接納天主賜給我們的恩典。