



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year A-October 11th 2020

***Readings: Isaiah 25: 6-10, Psalm 22, Philipians 4: 12-14. 19-20,
Matthew 22: 1-14***

There is an old saying, 'All the world loves a wedding'.

As someone who has, in his time, seen an awful lot of weddings, I am a little more nuanced in my response. In my earliest years in ministry, I would faithfully attend the receptions to which I was always invited, only to find myself on the table of guests that the happy couple didn't know what to do with. The priest, presumably, was the perfect candidate to deal with 'mad Tom' and stone deaf 'Great Aunt Grizelda'. I learnt, painfully, to simply drop in for a beer later on in the evening.

I endured some of the most painful attempts at public speaking ever recorded, from the lachrymose blubbing of the father of the bride to the singularly inappropriate rehearsal of private history from young men who regularly confuse wit with utter filth. (A tip for all wedding speakers..... be affectionate, funny where appropriate, and brief.)

I learnt not to judge a book by its covers. I was astonished at the number of 'good bets' in marriage that folded swiftly and the less likely ones that endured. It taught me to be more circumspect. A girl I privately advised against her proposed marriage said she would prove me wrong and write to me on her anniversary every year. She did. She was a workaholic and

he was one of the laziest men God ever created. It turned out to be a perfect match.

As for non-attendance.....my only experience was at my own wedding where a close college friend failed to make it. A combination of her short-sightedness, tight skirt, a generous décolletage that meant a restricted view of the ground and a pair of vertiginous stilettos saw her tumbling down the town hall steps in Barnsley and missing the coach to Cambridge. Full marks for trying.

Today's Gospel is a much more solemn affair. It is a Royal Wedding. The Wedding of the King's Son and Heir, the future ruler of all.

The preparation that goes into this is monumental. Heaven knows the ordinary wedding in planning can be an all-consuming affair. (Mercifully we brought our daughter up as a third son so, in current planning for next year's happy event, we are aided by a refreshingly 'blokeish', 'let's get on with it' rather than a forensic examination of matching napkins and table favours).

Here the King has got everything ready. The kingdom is 'en fete'.

The guests summoned. The moment we have all been waiting for has arrived. And then the story takes a shocking, macabre and gruesome twist. The first surprise is that some have got 'better' things to do. In the various Gospel accounts of this parable they are a preoccupation with business, investment, domestic affairs. Imagine getting an invite to Buckingham Palace and replying that you would come only to decide on the day that you were otherwise engaged.

Worse is to come. The King's servants are met not only with indifference but with downright hostility and, in some places, murderous violence.

Indifference, distorted imperatives, perverse priorities abound.

Carelessness topples over into insult.

Rejection careers into rebellion and revolution.

What kind of wedding is this?

The long prepared wedding is, of course, the wedding of the King's Son. The solemn marriage, in Christ, of God and Man. It is the nuptial celebration of Heaven and Earth. While the Old Testament abounds in the imagery of God as the Husband of His Bride, the Chosen People, so Jesus uses the great imagery of marriage to explain His Messiahship and its consequences. (It is no accident that the Church is known as the Bride of Christ). In Christ Jesus, God has reached out to His People and invited them to the Wedding of His Son – the wedding of God and Man, of Heaven and Earth.

Jesus, in this parable, correctly and tragically prophesies that some will be 'too busy' to attend. Others will reject the King's generosity. Others break out in open rebellion and not only reject the Great Invitation but oppress, cruelly treat and martyr the King's servants who only came to welcome them into the glorious celebration.

The story is deeply shocking but historically true – as two thousand years of evangelism bear witness. The response of Man to the glorious invitation of God is very mixed. In our own time, in our own culture, the invitation has been overwhelmingly neglected or declined by those with 'better things to do'. In other places, where alien creeds and hostile and godless philosophies obtain, the suffering of the servants of the King and the toll of martyrdom of those who bring the Good News continues to grow exponentially.

The King's response, when it comes, will be brutal and final. The enemies of the Kingdom, the ungrateful, the indifferent, the rejecters, the rebel hordes will meet an unsurprising fate. That too is part of the Gospel and, as evangelists, we must not disguise this solemn reality by larding it with sentimental universalism. Our decisions have consequences. God is not a hobby, a take it or leave it activity for 'those who like that kind of thing'. HE IS and He is Lord and King.

Are you ready for the wedding? Have you got your best bib and tucker out? Are you bringing your highest gift to the feast? Are you thrilled to

even be invited? Do you support the kingdom? Do you love the Son and look forward to His sovereign rule? Do you want the wedding banquet filled and to rejoice in that wedding of Heaven and Earth, of God and Man which is the only guarantee of our Salvation and which we rehearse every time we come to the altar of God and rejoice in our extraordinary and undeserved inclusion in the eternal Banquet of the Kingdom. This too is the Mystery of the Mass.

Everything is prepared. Go and invite.