

19. August 2021

## “Preparing the Return of the Lord”

*Mt 22:1-14*

*Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again, 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants with the words, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, my banquet is all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find to come to the wedding." So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are invited but not all are chosen.'*

The text describes a tragedy that continues to this day. The guests for whom the feast is prepared and who are invited in a special way fail to accept the invitation. For them, other work and circumstances are more important.

Why do those invited sometimes find it difficult?

Not infrequently it is probably pride, which considers one's own affairs to be the most important. Perhaps they have already grown cold towards the love of the King.

Now the invitation of God - and we understand that Jesus speaks of it - is not an act of human kindness or courtesy. Jesus is speaking to the Jews who have long been prepared for the wedding of the King's Son, namely for the encounter with the Saviour. After those invited did not accept the invitation twice, the text says, all people are invited to participate in the wedding feast. This refers to the people from the other nations, who accept this invitation in large numbers. But in order to be welcomed by the king, they

need a wedding garment. It is not difficult to relate this to Holy Baptism, which gives us the garment of grace.

Today we are in the time between the first and second coming of Christ.

Jesus invites us to consciously include His return at the end of time in our lives. Even if none of us alive knows whether we will witness Christ's return on the clouds of heaven, we should nevertheless live as if it were imminent.

The Church, the Bride of the King's Son, should wait for her Bridegroom with lamps burning, longing for Him with her prayers and works of love and hastening His coming (cf. 2 Pet 3:10-12).

Is this so?

Do we Catholics live in the awareness that the Lord is coming again? Have we not been offered all the graces of God, to be ready for His Parousia?

Can we not partake already, in the Holy Eucharist, of the marriage supper of the Lamb? Should we not therefore be the first to announce the return of the Beloved and hasten to tell all, so that they too may accept the invitation of the Great King?

Or has our love grown cold and we are more concerned with the things of this world, than the salvation of souls, and fall asleep?

Are we like those who have become indifferent, to whom everything else is more important than following the Lord's call?

Is it even a nuisance for us to worry about our own conversion and that of others?

If so, then love has grown cold and lukewarm, and we are struck by the words from Scripture:

*"And with the increase of lawlessness, love in most people will grow cold" (Mt 24:12).*

*"But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8)*

The Scriptures are also given to us as a reminder. The Lord calls us to be vigilant:

*"Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come down on all those living on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of man." (Lk 21:34-36)*

Today's text strongly reminds us not to ignore the Lord's invitations. For us, who are already following the Lord's invitation, this means to live vigilantly for His return. The focus on her should determine our whole life and make her shine with spousal love!