

15. October 2023

## The wedding garment

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 marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it 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 is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets 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; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."*

If we meditate on this Gospel in its biblical context, we can apply it first of all to the people of Israel. They were the privileged ones invited to the wedding feast. If the Father had sent His Son to bring humanity back home, then with Him the time of joy and celebration had begun, the time of fullness.

In another passage of the Gospel, Jesus says these words: "*Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast*" (Mk 2:19).

Unfortunately, however, the guests did not come: the Jews as a people did not accept the Lord's invitation, nor did they listen to the message of the apostles, who insisted on assuring them that, thanks to the immense divine love, they had been chosen to

attend the wedding that the Son of God, who was also a son of Israel, wanted to celebrate. When the invitation was refused and the messengers killed, the time came to extend the invitation to the Gentile nations so that the wedding hall would be filled with guests.

They have come and continue to come from all over the world to be led by Jesus into the Kingdom of His Father. But there is one condition... Although the invitation is open to all, good and bad, a festive garment is needed to attend the wedding. It is Jesus Himself who offers us this garment by forgiving our sins and washing us with His most pure blood.

To celebrate this wedding, we must accept God's invitation to recognise His love; we must accept the gift of salvation; we must serve God and humanity in a life of sincere and constant conversion.

All men and women live by God's mercy. But, as we see in today's Gospel, this does not mean that we can simply remain in the same state we were in when we received the divine invitation. At this time we often find in the Church a misunderstanding of what mercy is. Often a mercy is preached which does not require conversion and which, in certain circumstances, even minimises the seriousness of sin. Such ideas are misleading and paralyse man in his ability to choose to live his life according to the will of God.

If, on the other hand, we respond to God's invitation and strive to live a life of constant conversion, we will have put on the festive garment and will not only be called, but also chosen.