



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

October 12, 2014

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Gospel reading Matthew 22:1-14**

*[To be read aloud]*

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, “Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.” Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, ‘The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.’ The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. The king said to him, ‘My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?’ But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, ‘Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’ Many are invited, but few are chosen.”

### **Brief commentary:**

Today’s parable of the banquet from Matthew’s gospel is a companion to last week’s parable of the vineyard. Both are addressed to the ‘chief priests and elders of the people’ with whom Jesus seems to take issue and who, as leaders, bore a great responsibility for recognizing God’s initiatives and grace among them. In both parables there is an inability of the characters to respond to what God is doing in their midst. In both parables there are warnings that if they will not respond to the invitation to accept God’s new work, others will respond – while they themselves will miss out on participating in God’s unfolding plan. Today’s images are vivid: in Isaiah’s stunningly beautiful text, God promises to ‘destroy death forever...to wipe away the tears from every face’ from the peoples of all nations. It is a universal vision of healing and of restoration of paradise, vividly symbolized by the ‘great feast on the mountain of the LORD’. The 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm evokes the image of the shepherd graciously preparing a rich banquet for his flock. And Paul knows from his own experience that God is able to ‘supply for every need’. Who can turn down such a gracious invitation! Jesus’ parable points out that our reasons for not responding to God’s grace are simply excuses: we don’t recognize how valuable the banquet we are called to really is, with how much care and love it has been prepared, and how much it would satisfy and fill us with abounding joy. Even when we do respond we need to truly value the fact that we have been so freely invited and recognize the ultimate value of the gift, which has been given to us with such generous love. Like the one who did respond but arrived improperly clothed, because he did not think much of the grandeur of what he was called to, every person who responds to God’s grace must do so with true gratitude of heart and valuing the gift received. Like Isaiah we are called to hope for and rejoice in what God will accomplish; like the psalmist we are to confidently trust in the abundant care and generosity of God the Shepherd; like Paul we are to depend on God’s providence in the most difficult situations; and like the guests of Jesus’ parable we are to respond wholeheartedly to God’s banquet of grace that comes to us *in person*...Jesus. No reason or excuse should deter us from responding with daring faith, hope and love.

### **Today’s reading offers significant messages:**

- God alone will bring the fullness of healing to all nations and bring to fruition the salvation of all creation. In Jesus, God’s salvation is realized.
- All are invited to God’s kingdom, but not all respond. But we are also to respond for the right reasons and are to do so with great gratitude for what God has done in our lives.
- Every Christian has the mission of announcing the gospel and thus convey to many God’s loving invitation to enter his kingdom.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- How am I being a sign of the hope that God will renew all things? Indeed, how am I bringing hope in the lives of people who need real hope?
- When did I last thank God for what he has done in my through Jesus Christ? The word ‘Eucharist’ means ‘thanksgiving’; may every liturgy be a moment of special profound gratitude: “How can I repay the LORD for all the great good done for me? I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people” (Ps 116:12-14).
- How am I being a missionary of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in my family, community, parish, society?

*Suggested readings:* Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 541-42