

TRINITY 18- 2020
Isaiah 25:6-10
Phil 4:12-14;10-20
Mt 22:1-14

We all receive invitations to events which we reject, accept but don't attend or accept and attend. Our baptism is an invitation from God for us to live a life of Christian discipleship and the Church invites us to affirm our decision to accept during the Easter Vigil Liturgy. It is those who choose to remain faithful to God in their lives who will participate in the heavenly banquet following the last judgment.

The image of the heavenly banquet is described by Isaiah as occurring on a mountaintop. This banquet is not one that is exclusive to the Children of Israel but is for those from all nations who choose to acknowledge God as their Lord. It is faithfulness not an accident of birth, that guarantees a seat at the banquet. For the guests, death does not disrupt their relationship with God. So the Jews recognised universal salvation, immortality and God's tenderness in salvation history. Universal, however, does not mean that everyone will be saved no matter how they live because God is nice. We have to choose to be saved by choosing to be faithful.

When Jesus told the Jewish leadership his parable about the wedding feast, he was not telling them something new. Isaiah had already done that, but in Jesus' parable, God is the king who invites his chosen people to the wedding feast to celebrate the marriage between heaven and earth. Like the tenants in the vineyard the Jews that Jesus addressed had chosen to ignore the message of Isaiah, so new tenants were appointed. In this parable, new guests such as Gentile tax collectors and sinners were invited. Even so, before the festivities began, one man who wasn't wearing a wedding garment was expelled.

Nice Christians think that was somewhat harsh, but dress code matters – even in some pubs and airline lounges! In the New Testament clothing is an image of being in a right relationship with God. This is why the saints are those dressed in white robes in the Book of Revelation (Rev 7:13). When Jesus says that many are called but few are chosen, he means that all are invited to receive salvation but only a few choose to accept the gift. Matthew's gospel warns his readers about the consequences of causing others to sin or becoming lukewarm in their discipleship. God's standard bearers in the world must live up to God's standards.

What we choose to do with God's invitation at our baptism will determine whether there is a seat for us at the heavenly banquet. St Paul tells the Philippians that being a good Catholic Christian is no walk in the park. Some were contemplating abandoning the faith because the demands were hard so he tells them to 'get real.'

Catholic Christianity demands more than putting 'Catholic' on a census or hospital admission form. It demands more than being C and E – attending mass at Christmas and Easter. Neither is it about fixing up the world and being nice. The Catholic Church's primary ministry is to save souls. If we live with our back to the sun, we live in the darkness of our own shadow. It

is when we turn to face the brightness of God's light that our shadow falls behind us. Salvation requires moving from living in a state of guilt or being content with being healthy and happy to being forgiven and holy. Salvation requires we shift from being a slave to our selfish feelings and desires to knowing the liberation that flows from being God's service. Like all God's gifts, salvation is offered to all but has to be accepted, received, opened and used by living according to God's laws before we truly possess it.

Choices, choices, choices – we make them all the time, but some are much more important than others.

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