

Gospel text

Matthew 22: 1-14

1 Jesus spoke again to tell people a story from life. 2 The domain of God is similar to a man who was a king and who organized a wedding feast for his son. 3 So he sent his servants to summon the guests to come to the wedding, but they did not want to come. 4 Again he sent other servants with this instruction: "Tell the guests that my meal is ready, my bulls and my fat animals have been slaughtered, so everything is ready. Come to the wedding!" But the guests, completely indifferent, returned, one to his field, the other to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants to mistreat and kill them. 7 Then the king became angry and sent his army to destroy these murderers and set their cities on fire. 8 Then he said to these servants, "The wedding is ready, but the guests were unable to adjust. 9 Go therefore to the crossroads, and invite everyone you find to the wedding". 10 These servants went out on the roads and picked up all those they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 After entering to see the guests, the king saw a man who had not put on his wedding dress. 12 So he said to him, "My friend, how did you get in here without your wedding dress?". He did not know what to answer. 13 Then the king said to the servants, "Throw him out with hands and feet bound in the middle of the night" This is where we will find a world of remorse and anger. 14 Indeed, there are many people called, but few ultimately meet the selection criteria."

Gospel commentary - Homily

Adjusting to life until death

When a man and a woman decide to live together, they know they will have to adjust to each other. This adjustment will not take place automatically, but will require all the energy of their good will. They will have to open up to a different personality, to a different family and personal history. But they will do it willingly, because they are powered by the force of love and the happiness of living together. When the first child enters the family, they will still have to adjust: they will no longer be two, but three, with all the requirements and constraints of the third person. But again, they will do it willingly, moved by the joy and happiness of having this child. Have you noticed this? Whenever we open up to life in any form, we must always adjust, otherwise we will miss what is offered.

It is in this context that we will read the Gospel of Matthew today. Jesus compares the domain of God to weddings organized by a king, but everyone declines his invitation because the guests are more interested in going about their daily routine than in opening up to something wonderful offered at the very moment. Finally, only people available because they have no land or business will accept the invitation. This story is followed by a second part where one of the guests will be kicked out because he has not been able to adjust fully to the situation: he opened up to the invitation, but he didn't go all the way by adjusting his clothes.

Where are we heading to with this wedding banquet? When Matthew wrote his Gospel, he sought to understand why the Jewish religious elite refused to open up to the teaching of Jesus, a teaching that spoke of the immeasurable and unconditioned love of a God for his people, a love that creates the same environment as a wedding feast. His answer? This elite was too well established in the social structure of the time, were too obsessed with their immediate interests to open up to anything else. This is the sad observation made about his people by Matthew. But at the end of the story, who is this man who feasts without a wedding dress? It is the Christian, the one who, unlike the religious elite, accepted the teaching of Jesus, but who no longer lives in accordance with his baptismal robe, whose life no longer bears the fruits of love. The Gospel ends as a cry of pain: there are so many people called, why are there so few who follow through on the invitation?

This story of the wedding banquet takes us back to a mysterious dimension of life. How is it possible to refuse good news, unconditional love, a big party, a wonderful reality whatever it is? Or again, how can an original great love one day die out? What would allow us to remain open every day to the music of life and the celebration of love? This is our tragedy: it is not that yesterday we had an open heart, that it will be open today, because since yesterday life has changed, and the adaptation must continue. Let me mention the figure of Mugabe, elected president in 1980 of the young republic of Zimbabwe with dreams of social and racial justice. How could he have become this old man who clings violently to power, instead of embracing a world of justice and peace for blacks and whites where everyone could dance in the street? Collectively, our world has also changed, with environmental stress caused by our industry and the debate over oil. How are we going to adjust?

The challenge we have to face is to remain open to life in all its depth, in its multiple and changing dimensions, and this requires adjustment every day. This is where we can hear God, this is where the wedding banquet takes place. This is the testimony of a woman, Louise Dallaire, who wrote this beautiful little book: "Tourists don't go to Abalak". A mother and a retired teacher, she accepts an invitation to a celebration of the nomadic peoples of the Sahara, in Niger. Despite hunger, thirst, discomfort and the loss of all her cultural landmarks, she opens up to the greatness and beauty of every human being. She let herself be guided by an immeasurable faith in life, she found the wedding referred to by the parable.

We want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Every day, he opened himself to all the calls of life, he constantly adjusted to what he saw and heard, and this until his death. Is it also our desire and our prayer?

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, July 2008