

# Pastor's Note for 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

## 15 October 2017

I was taken aback this week when a Sister told me this story. She and two other Sisters were summoned by a woman of very high rank to go with her to a distant place to give some gifts to the elderly. They would travel by plane in a few days' time. The first gave her excuse that she had already arranged to travel elsewhere; the second that she had had knee surgery and couldn't travel and the third that she had cancer. "I cannot come," they each said, and with good reasons. I replied to the story teller, "Do you know what the gospel is for this Sunday?"

In their heyday, the Medical Missionary Sisters composed a song, "I cannot come..." based on this story. The parable today completes a trio of parables which illustrate the choice we have of accepting Jesus' invitation to the fullness of life in eternity. Jesus directs this message to the religious leaders, the chief priests and the Pharisees, and points out that they are turning their backs on God's gift. You will remember two Sundays ago the parable of the two sons, one of whom said 'yes' to the father's request to work in the vineyard and the other who said 'no.' Last week's gospel was about the landowner who planted the vineyard and leased it to tenants, all of whom resorted to violence against him. This weekend these stories reach a crescendo in the parable of the King (God) who invites guests (us) to the banquet he hosts in honour of his son (Jesus). Each of the three parables ends with Jesus telling us that the kingdom of God will be taken away from the religious leaders and us too if we don't realise the priceless value of the invitation.

Themes flow through each of the Readings this weekend. Some of these are:

- the fullness of life contrasted with death and anything that diminishes life;
- our need to depend upon God and
- the end times. Life continues to move onwards to the time of the eternal banquet;

Isaiah paints in his poem an idyllic picture of life with God who waits on us on the holy mountain. God sets the table and invites us to the banquet of gourmet foods and drinks where joy and blessings abound. Isaiah proclaims the presence and power of God who can rid us of any darkness and death. We wait then on God.

In the second Reading, we can trace in Paul's letter to the Philippians the same three themes. Paul has experienced both plenty and poverty and relies on God who satisfies every human need. The end of earthly life is intimated in the trials Paul suffers but even more assuring is God's triumph over them in the glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

The wedding feast brings these themes into sharp relief. The king is God who hosts the heavenly (eschatological or end times) feast. Those who decline God's invitation are those who follow pathways that lead to diminishment of life while those who accept the invitation are those who depend upon and trust in God. The invitation is open for everyone. God has set the table – the banquet is ready for us. It speaks only of love – love forever. We do not have to do anything but accept or decline God's invitation. The questions for us to ponder today are: Are we open to the invitation? Do we depend upon God? What are we doing to prepare for the end times?

The last words in the final verse of "I cannot come" are "*When the Lord and Master call us, Be certain not to say...I cannot come.*"

*Blessings ~ Sr Mary Neven rsm*