

## Thursday, Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

### Matthew 22:1-14

*“Invite everyone you can to the wedding.”*

Today, in the Gospel reading, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. It is still so fresh in our memories of the challenges young couples wanting to get married had during the past year on account of the lockdown due to COVID 19 pandemic. The opportunity to gather around a table and to share a meal with family and friends is what people missed most at the very heart of the lockdown. Serving food is very central at various events such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, retirements and even funerals. We all treasure the coming together of family and friends around a table. When Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven, he frequently drew on this valuable human experience of a shared meal. He once spoke of the kingdom of heaven as a banquet to which people from north, south, east and west would come. When Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven as a wedding banquet, he is drawing on that imagery in the Jewish Scriptures of God as the husband of his people, and Israel as God's bride. In the parable Jesus tells in today's gospel reading, those who originally said 'yes' to the wedding feast when it was still some time off, turn around to say 'no' on the day of the feast itself. What a disappointing response at a time, when, in the words of the gospel reading, *'everything is ready'*. The parable suggests that God can do the inviting, but God cannot force a response to his invitation. We, ourselves, need to be attentive to the invitation and, hopefully respond to it in gratitude, recognizing that the invitation is a sign that God values us and honours us. God's invitation is guaranteed. It is always there. In the parable, when those originally invited said 'no' at the last minute, the host sent out an invitation to others so that his wedding hall would be filled. God's plans can never be frustrated by our keeping away at the last minute. God's banquet of life will not be cancelled. It is meant to take place. It is left to us to respond to God's invitation or not.