

# **The Inclusive Community**

**October 12, 2008**

**Homily of Kathy Bailey**

**Call**

**Matthew 22: 1-14**

**Have you ever planned a party and no one showed up? You prepared the food, hung the decorations the wine is chilled and ready to pour.**

**The King threw just such a party. All was ready but the guests did not show. This is a comparison to the Kingdom of Heaven?**

**As we know from previous lessons the chief priests, and the Pharisees were working very hard to trap Jesus into giving some evidence they could hold against him. However, their questions were often answered with parables.**

**I personally like metaphors, similes analogies, and parables. I understand most things better when they are compared to concepts I am already familiar with. I often teach with analogies. Yet, some listeners have difficulty understanding the comparisons and needing to think through what is said is often troublesome. The chief priests and Pharisees were perturbed by the parables yet they were starting to get the sense that they were often the subject in such stories. Last week we heard about the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. At the end Matthew 21: verse 45 and 46 it was said and I quote “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.”**

**Now once again Jesus spoke to them in parables. And once again Jesus presents a view of the kingdom of heaven. It is interesting to note that Luke 14 : 15 – 24 tells a similar parable. In Luke “someone gave a great dinner” and in Matthew 22 “the King gave a wedding banquet. In both parables many were invited but they were all too busy to attend. The invited guests had many excuses, in Luke we heard of a piece of land, newly purchased oxen and a recent marriage. In Matthew one needed to go to his farm and another to his business and others even seized, mistreated and killed the king’s slaves. How much it must have hurt and angered the party giver that those so thoughtfully invited had nothing but excuses and even resorted to violence.**

**The King even issued a second invitation with more detail of the feast that was ready and yet the guests chose not to come.**

**So the King deemed his guests unworthy and sent others to invite all they see, the good and the bad, the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame. All were invited. Yes, we are all invited also.**

**People began to come to the party, the good and bad from the streets throughout the kingdom. Since those in the streets probably did not have wedding garments with them one may wonder how they arrived in proper dress. It helps to know that wedding banquets of the time often lasted several days and it was a custom in the Middle East that kings would provide garments befitting an occasion such as a wedding. Therefore it is probably safe to say that those who came put on wedding robes as they entered the banquet hall.**

**But the king spotted one man without the proper garment. How could one be so insulting to refuse to put on the wedding robe. This defiant person was physically expelled from the party. Yes this man was not chosen yet it seems that he chose not to be chosen**

**This parable has been interpreted in many ways all relying on an image of a party thrown by God offering the rewards of heaven. All of Israel including priests and Pharisees were invited. Yet, they did not come. In view of this insult, God invited everyone else. People started to come. Most showed respect to God and clothed themselves in garments of repentance and open reception of the Holy Spirit. Some, however, attended with closed hearts and hypocritical attitudes. They did not put on the robe. They were not allowed to stay. As it is said many are called but few are chosen because when one is called that person chooses whether to go. You can't be among the chosen if you do not appear with sincerity.**

**As our view of God is evolving, with Dick Scaine's guidance, we are learning that Christ is truly in each of us. We know that we are all invited to the banquet and when we listen to the Christ within and open our eyes to the message of love we will in fact be wearing the robe our creator designed for us. We look to the invitation that is continually within us, the invitation to be co-creators with God. It is too bad that many wish to shun the invitation. In a way this is another reason for us to view scripture from the perspective of the God within. Perhaps it is easier to avoid attending the party given by the God way out there. But as God's children infused with a living God we are actually co-party givers. It is our party and therefore we are all in attendance. Do we sometimes forget or try to avoid our role as hosts. Sure we do. Do we sometimes slip off our wedding robe, of course. Can we become closer to this spirit within and enhance our comfort in the robe and enjoyment of the banquet. You bet we can. Each step we take in learning and understanding this creative power of the one we call God the more we will find comfort in the wedding robe and enjoyment in the banquet and the less we will find excuses to avoid the party.**

**Now, lets all join the party where ALL are welcomed.**