



SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

**The Parishes of:** Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 28th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 22: 1-14

Folks who work in radio tell you that radio is better than television because the pictures are better - you make your own! See the film of a book you read and it's not the same. We engage with stories in very individual ways. Good storytellers direct us but leave us to create our own images. Engaging with stories makes artists of us all.

Matthew the Gospel writer tells us Jesus' stories. In Sunday readings for this month he shares the Lord's critique of the attitudes and style of the religious and political leaders of his time. In Jesus' kingdom, love is expressed in a passion for justice. Human dignity demands a respect for others that authorities must not disregard. Self serving leadership is exposed by good illustrations. The Lord's well-crafted stories are intentionally memorable.

We've all had invitations to weddings. Some we've been delighted to accept but there may be others that we declined for a variety of preferences. Jesus' wedding feast story has darker tones. Some of those invited decide to shoot the messengers. The story is a vehicle for a deeper teaching.

Today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah promises the heavenly banquet - a whacking great feast for everyone. Jewish people were the Chosen People, the invited people, but they became complacent and immersed in their own affairs. The prophets sent to remind them were the messengers they rejected. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans a few years before Matthew was writing his Gospel.

Jesus renews the invitation, inviting everyone - the good, the bad and the ugly - to the banquet to share in the love and hospitality of God. With this expansive welcome the seeming worthies and the underprivileged poor are all desired and called to a feast beyond any they've known. What a mindbending gesture! This invite goes out to the world. What God has prepared for us exceeds our workaday experience.

We probably wait for the word 'but'... and it comes in the guise of the character who makes no effort, turns up without a wedding garment and gets thrown out. We can think about it like this perhaps. When we were christened (that is, made like Christ - it's worth noticing what the word means) we were dressed in white, or a shawl was wrapped around us. The baptising priest said to us "You have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven". It's big stuff. Not just a social occasion. We should "be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12). That's some garment. A baptism certificate requires a lot from us. Remember how you're dressed in God's eyes. You look smart. Be the same, OK?



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### More from Pope Francis

Our faith in Christ, who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members.

Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid. A mere glance at the Scriptures is enough to make us see how our gracious Father wants to hear the cry of the poor. "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt, I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... so I will send you .....(Exodus 3:7-8,10). We also see how he is concerned for their needs, "When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer" (Judges 3:15). If we, who are God's means of hearing the poor, turn deaf ears to this plea, we oppose the Father's will and his plan; that poor person "might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt" (Deuteronomy 15:9). A lack of solidarity towards his or her needs will directly affect your relationship with God. "For if in bitterness of soul he calls down a curse upon you, his Creator will hear his prayer". (Ecclesiasticus 40:6).

The old question always returns, "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help" (1 John 3:17). Let us recall also how bluntly the apostle James speaks of the cry of the oppressed, "The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. (James 5:4).

It means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter. The word 'solidarity' is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mind-set which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.

*The Joy of the Gospel paras 186-188*