



SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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

Unusual descriptions grab us. They slow us down and cause us to ponder, if just for a moment, arresting our urge to move on. Being *'thrown out into the dark where there'll be weeping and grinding of teeth'* not only paints a picture of regret and frustration but almost conjures up the feelings. It's the grinding of teeth bit that does it for me. We're talking Gospel detail given us today. Don't miss it. It hits a raw nerve.

This sharp yarn is aimed unerringly at chief priests and leaders of the people. As the storyboard unfolds, will they see themselves as the villains of the piece? The crafty tale incriminates it's audience. But wait. It's also shared with a new audience today—that's you and me. Rather than enjoying the clever story levelled at others, it has its claws into us as well. Sometimes it's hard to avoid Jesus' gaze. We have something to learn and he's anxious to teach.

This sketch of disinterest and violence is to be embraced rather than deflected onto others. We decline invitations more than we realise and this parable is a wake up call. Picture the scene as if you're the one inviting. The food, the catering, the expense and the expectations are all rejected—the hurt is deeply wounding. We'd feel it personally. It comes across as the refusers just not being bothered. It interferes with their plans and projects. The callous indifference in Jesus' story boiled over into violent resentment - a teacher's exaggeration to engage our attention.

The Lord is inviting me, inviting you, all the time to share his company, to sit and eat with him, to receive so much from the origin and author of all giving. Are we so entrenched in even legitimate pursuits that, at best, we fit him in, at worst we resent the nagging claim his call makes despite our lack of response?

We're all invited to an extraordinary banquet, the feast of heaven, rejoicing in our Father's house in the company of those dear to us and new friends beyond counting. We're led into the vision every time we participate in Mass and receive the food of life in Communion, sometimes described as the foretaste of the banquet feast of heaven. The invitation wasn't earned but it comes from an extravagant God. Jesus loved food, he loved parties. The table talk in his company was life changing. What awaits us defies description.

We can't afford to be casual about this. The one thrown out for making no effort cautions us all. Grinding our teeth and weeping in the dark is hardly a welcome prospect. Smell the aromas coming from the kitchen and be ready in your very best. The door is always open.



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Pope Francis on the parish Church

Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion. It is the primary subject of evangelization, since it is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place, and in it the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative. It is the Church incarnate in a certain place, equipped with all the means of salvation bestowed by Christ, but with local features. Its joy in communicating Jesus Christ is expressed both by a concern to preach him to areas in greater need and in constantly going forth to the outskirts of its own territory or towards new sociocultural settings. Wherever the need for the light and the life of the Risen Christ is greatest, it will want to be there. To make this missionary impulse ever more focused, generous and fruitful, I encourage each particular Church to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform.

- The Joy of the Gospel - para 30