

**Gee, I Really Forgot My Tuxedo**  
**28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Matthew 22:1-14**

We continue our reading of Matthew's gospel.  
This Sunday we have another parable—eerily similar to last Sunday's parable.  
Both of them involve a really “bad servant day”, i.e., servants getting killed.  
Upon closer inspection, however, we discover them to be rather different.

The audience is particularly important to situate in the reading of this parable.  
Otherwise, we may not understand

- the tone of Jesus' discourse
- what exactly Jesus is communicating

Jesus is addressing the chief priests and elders, with whom there is an ongoing struggle.  
Jesus has little tolerance—because it is objectively intolerable—for their presumption.  
They have been entrusted an important responsibility regarding the Chosen People.  
As is often tempting to do, however, they transform *authority*  
—which is a *service* of the common good  
into *power*—which is a *control* of the common good.  
In other words, they think they *own* the show.  
When we think we own the show, we think we are entitled, we are presumptuous...  
This is important to situate, for, otherwise, the parable is (to me, at least!) disturbing.

We have a wedding feast for the king's son.  
Come party time, the guests refuse to attend.  
How amazing and odd: normally, when the king throws a party, you go!  
The king sends a second group of servants to summon the guests,  
with a more explicitly inviting message.  
Some ignore the invitation, others kill the servants: sweet!  
[It sounds very much like last week's parable  
in which the landowner sent servants to collect the produce, but were killed...  
The major difference, as I think we will see, is that the focus here  
is not the one who sends the servants but *those to whom the servants are sent.*]

Justice follows the rejection, and the murderers pay the penalty.  
And the king sends another group of servants—not to the guests, however,  
but to anyone and everyone they find: *all* were invited.  
The celebration begins, and the king makes the rounds to greet the guests.  
He comes across a fellow without a wedding garment.  
And this is where—*misunderstood*—the parable is disturbing.  
The fellow is bound and cast into the darkness.  
Had I been there, I would have said,  
“Relax on the dress code!” *or* “You could have just asked him to leave.”  
How bizarrely excessive, n'est-ce pas?

Jesus is revealing the Father, like this king, and the One Whom he has sent: i.e., Himself,  
Whom the Father invites us to encounter and celebrate.

And I believe Jesus is addressing the issue of presumption and attitudes of entitlement.

The wedding garment symbolizes the appropriate inner attitude

in one invited to the celebration of God, of the Son.

What is the appropriate inner attitude?

It would seem: awe and humble gratitude.

None of us has a right to the Son, to Jesus.

It is a gratuitous invitation...

The expulsion of the inappropriately dressed fellow is not meant to suggest

that God is prone to bursts of rage.

It reveals the Father's vulnerability with respect to the Son,

much like that expressed when Jesus became angry in the Temple become marketplace.

"For God so *loved* the world that He gave his only son."

When you give what is dearest to you, you are vulnerable.

And, if ever someone

- takes the gift for granted
- presumes the gift is theirs

you are understandably hurt and angered.

The expulsion of the inappropriately dressed fellow reveals that there is no room

for anything unloving in the presence of the One who is love.

The big question then for us is: what is our inner attitude

regarding the encounter and celebration of Christ?

We could be more specific in our question.

(keep in mind that the question is not about guilt but about honesty.)

We believe that the Mass, the Eucharist, is the feast of the Son.

Do we come to church with awe and humble gratitude?

"Are you kidding?!? I'm just glad I made it!"

"Awe and humble gratitude? Mass is too boring to be in awe and to be grateful."

We would do well to articulate several things.

We are talking about attitudes not emotions.

I am not asking if you *feel* awe and gratitude.

I am asking if you focus the eyes of your heart in faith so as to know that

- God is awesome
- the Eucharist is a gift to which we do not have rights

This willful focus entails being very honest with a God, who already knows our struggles.

"Lord, I go through the motions."

Lord, I am so easily content with doing the 'church thing',

fulfilling my Sunday obligation—even though I don't really know what that means."

Ask God to reveal Himself to you.

Yearn for divine intimacy.

A sense of awe will emerge, awe that you have been drawn onto sacred ground...