



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

Can't come - washing my hair etc

Readings: Isaiah 25: 6-10a, Ps 23, Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20, Matthew 22: 1-14

'All the world loves a wedding', we used to say. And we used to sing,

'Love and marriage, love and marriage -go together like a horse and carriage,

This I tell you brother, You can't have one without the other'.

How times change.

We live in a society now where marriage is an afterthought to, often, years of trial cohabitation as the woman's fertility is left to the 'Last Chance Saloon' while the man decides if he is finally going to transition into a grown up and pop the long delayed and, usually, much discussed question. The wedding, far from being the starting gate to a new level of mutual and deepening love in the great adventure into God and into one another that is at the heart of the Sacrament, becomes a huge and colossally expensive event celebrating the advent of middle age and a rapid exercise in catching up on maturity.

Love, the modernists assure us, is not a piece of paper. We never said it was.

The 'piece of paper' merely attests the solemn oath and promise and commitment made by the two becoming now one flesh. That's the deal.

Fans of the great singer Joni Mitchell, whose love-life was a rolling carnival of bad choices, may recall her triumphant assertion that 'Me and my old man, we don't need a piece of paper from the City Hall keeping us tight and true'. Maybe....but then again that relationship didn't last to the end of the B side.

Holy Scripture has a lot of marriage. From the Hobson's Choice pairing of Adam & Eve, through the lovelorn years of devotion by Jacob to wed the lovely Rachel. The rescued widowhood of the faithful Ruth romanced by the opulent Boaz. The passionate sensuality of The Song of Songs, the heartbreaking infidelity of Hosea's wife.

The sneering contempt of Michal for her embarrassing husband David. The reckless and destructive passion of the same David for the carefully positioned naked bather on the roof opposite the palace, leading to adultery and murder. The miraculous wedding at Cana through to the marriage of the Lamb.

The image of wedding is no accident. The Lord Himself often employs the image to convey his relationship with His people. It is the bond of love and commitment on His part and ours which He faithfully keeps and we so often default on. So here in today's Gospel we see the wedding again used to convey something of that love and something eternal.

The long-awaited Marriage of the King's son is about to take place. The invites go out. Unthinkably, the excuses roll in. A royal wedding and you are too busy? For one man it's a property deal that holds him back. For another it's a new car – well oxen anyway. For a third he uses the excuse of his own recent wedding to snub the imminent wedding couple and, by proxy, the whole family, not least the king. The wedding is, of course, like that at Cana, the wedding of the Son, the wedding of God and Man, the wedding of the

immortal and the mortal, the wedding of the temporal and the eternal. It is the wedding feast of the Lamb. It is Christ marrying His Bride, the Church. And you tell me that you are too busy. You tell me that the kids play football on Sunday morning. You tell me that your wife says it spoils a Sunday, that you need a day to chill out. You tell me that you work on Sunday, you have a garden, odd jobs to do, DIY. You tell me that you are too busy for God. He invites you and you snub Him. Failure to comply with a royal summons has consequences.

Disrespecting the huge preparation and cost that has been made in order to receive us, His generosity is met by a series of utterly pathetic excuses. The cost of this banquet, the marriage feast of the Lamb is outlined in the passage from Isaiah. The mountain is Zion, Jerusalem, specifically the Calvary. The rich fare is the Host. The fine wine, His blood. We know this because Isaiah tells us that this power will destroy death itself. It is the sacrifice of Christ re-presented on this altar every time we offer the Mass.

We have done nothing to deserve the invitation. It is an extraordinary honour and privilege and we spurn it at eternal cost. When trivial things trump the divine priority the invitation transforms, by virtue of our rejection, into an eternal exclusion.

These few weeks of Matthew's Gospel are an insight into the blindness, self-centredness and rank ingratitude of Man. They are truly terrifying.

In a society that ceaselessly blathers on about 'inclusion', these parables are specifically about the cost of disobedience, impenitence and ingratitude and the consequent and inevitable 'exclusion'.

We are all called to celebrate with the King. Why would we refuse?