

Homily 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (15.10.17)

'Many are called but few are chosen.' The way to everlasting life.

I thought I'd preach on sex and violence, because the world's full of it. Many of the older generation tell me they don't watch much television anymore because programmes seem to be full of it. At times, we all feel overwhelmed by such unnecessary portrayals. However, when we turn to the Bible we find similar themes, but the writers stress the beauty of marriage and sex. The Old Testament 'Song of Songs' is all about the love of Man and Woman – which the Church has always seen as an image of the love of Christ for his Church. And we find violence is present too, again especially in the Old Testament – the unjust sinful violence of Humanity, compared and contrasted with the just judgement of God.

If you open the Bible at the very beginning, it starts with the twin themes of sinful Humanity, contrasted with a good and just God. In the Book of Genesis we are told God created Humankind in the image of Himself – 'male and female He created them.' That image is of a unique, distinct, equal and complementary partnership with God – a good work of God – who created a truly united couple – mentally, emotionally and physically – qualities that psychiatrists today would call whole and integrated. This good work of God is only marred by sin followed by violence – involving the children of Adam and Eve – where we see the violent murder of Abel by his brother Cain. And Cain and Abel are symbols of Humankind's lack of wholeness and integrity which leads to disintegration between the sexes, and the violence of humans to the point of murderous intent. That murderous intent, according to the Book of Genesis – and I'm sure you'll agree, is in us all, potentially, because of sin.

If we skip from the first book of the Bible to the last – the Book of Revelation – or the Book of the Apocalypse, as it's also known, we see again these two themes – but in a very different picture. We see the song of victory of the wedding feast of 'the Lamb' and 'His Bride,' who has made herself ready. In other words the reward of the good and faithful will be even more glorious, than any earthly union of bride and groom. In other words, the ecstasy of a united married couple will, potentially, be exceeded by our future sharing in the glory of God. And this future glory is preceded by the final cosmic battle between Good and Evil. However the result of that final battle is already known – even though we haven't reached that point yet. The Book of Revelation tells us that all God's enemies will be vanquished – because Christ has won the final battle over sin and death. If you look through the Bible from beginning to end – these twin themes of violence and our fallen natures are ever present. We are all caught up in the conflict within our fallen natures, compared and contrasted with the goodness of a life giving God.

The parable of the Wedding Feast in today's Gospel reminds us that the Wedding Feast of God is already prepared. The King is an image of God, and Jesus is the Son at the wedding. The parable is also a reminder that the Eucharist – our Mass, is a foretaste of the glories and bliss of heaven. We are the invited ones, we should be able to see the signs, the important signs in the Eucharist. Woe betide us if we treat the Eucharist like those who were invited to the wedding – if we treat God and his Sacraments with disrespect, or blaspheme Him or take lightly His message of Salvation. The message is obvious, isn't it? We'll be destroyed because of our sinful selves.

But what is the message of the guest without the wedding garment? That is meant to remind us of the white garment of our baptism. The alb that the servers and I wear is the baptismal robe, based on the clothes of Jesus. In theory, we should all put this on when we come to church. In other words we've clothed ourselves in Christ with this white garment, and to fail to bring this gift, this baptism intact to God when we meet Him – here in the

Eucharist, and face to face at our judgement, is dangerous indeed. Like the parable of the Talents, if we bury this gift or ignore it, this affects our eternal destiny and outcome. So to come to the Eucharist now, or to the throne of God at the end, with the wrong disposition – violent, unrepentant etc – this will find us with no answer to the question, ‘how did you get in here my friend without a wedding garment?’ That’s quite frightening isn’t it?

But, the foretaste of God’s promises in the Eucharist – coming to the Lord with our wedding garment intact – this will lead us to the very end of the Book of Revelation – which is our new beginning. Truly we will be among the Blessed – ‘Happy are those who are called and invited to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb!’