

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity
October 15, 2017

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People respond in one of four different ways to the call of Christ. And the Lord Jesus Himself is the authority for this observation. First, there are those who make light of the invitation. They are the ones who are so full of themselves they show no concern for the claims of God. There were such people in 1st Century Palestine, and they are around today. You know some of these people. But in the parable Our Lord takes no notice of them. They pass out of the parable without comment.

Then there are those who *actively oppose* God's will. (These are the same people described by our Lord's parable of the wicked tenants which you heard last week.) While people full of themselves are not even on the stage, those who combine ignorance, pride, and violence, always get the Lord's full attention. Just as in last week's parable these people come to a violent end.

The third category describes the Catholic Church. The Church on earth contains a mixture of good and bad. (The Lord described her membership in the parable of the wheat and the tares.) There is no requirement made of these people beyond that they answer the call of the King and honor the occasion by presenting themselves in proper attire. There is no question of personal merit. No one earned the right to an invitation. The King's invitation was pervasive. *Come one, come all*. That is the invitation of the Catholic Church.

But this is where the parable begins to get uncomfortable! For among those who accept the call, one person is found without the proper wedding garment. This is not a matter of a poor soul who cannot afford a proper suit of clothes. Forget that! "God sees not as man sees but looks on the heart." What is being pointed out is there are some souls who, while enjoying all the privileges of the Catholic Church, yet treat it all with indifference. To them the gospel is not worth the proper garment of a serious-minded response to the call of Christ. Their response does not issue in the pursuit of holiness of life. And in the parable Jesus told, it is suggested that this man might have been better off to stay away rather than have insulted the host by coming in every-day clothes.

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Christ did not revile the first people who rejected His invitation out of hand. They simply passed off the stage and out of the parable. That may mean “don’t even bother to show up at the gate of heaven!” But the man who accepted the invitation and then treated the whole affair lightly, the one who actually tried to enter the Kingdom of God without cleaning up his act, was cast into a very unhappy place.

Finally the King came to meet his guests. Almighty God takes particular notice of those who profess His holy religion and who have their names recorded in His visible Church. That is where *we* come in. Christ gave this parable so that we would accept its lesson. We resolve to cultivate the gifts of God that we may understand and take to heart their true value for our lives. Jesus said “Strive to enter by the narrow gate.” Let ours be a *strenuous faithfulness*. That is the proper wedding garment. And then when the King comes to meet His guests and we say “Lord, have mercy,” Blessed Jesus will say, “Enter into the joy of your Lord.”