

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
October 11, 2020

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In the Parable of the Wedding Banquet Our Lord Jesus gave us the Divine diagnosis and prognosis of the four basic responses to the Gospel proclamation. This is not one opinion among others! (You remember the story of the preacher who described what God said and added: “and I tend to agree with Him!”) God is our Creator. *And He knows.*

The first category consists of those who make light of the invitation. So full of themselves, they show no concern for the claims of God. You know these people! In the parable the king takes no notice of them. This doesn't mean we ignore or dismiss them. But they *do* pass out of the parable without comment, implying God will deal with them some other way.

Then there are those who *actively oppose* God's will. (These are the same folk as described in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in last Sunday's gospel.) While ignorance in the first people invited drew no immediate condemnation, *this* combination of ignorance, pride, and violence, always comes home to roost. Just as in last week's parable, these people come to a violent end.

The third category shows the situation of the Church Militant, containing as she does a mixture of good and bad. (The Lord also described this aspect of the Kingdom in His Parable of the Wheat and Tares.) No requirement is made of these people other than they answer the call of the king, and honor the occasion by presenting themselves in proper attire. *There is no question of personal merit.* Nobody earned the right to enter! The king's invitation was pervasive. *Come one, come all* is a description of the Catholic Church.

But here is where the parable begins to get uncomfortable! Among those who accepted the call there is one person in the fourth category. He was found without a proper wedding garment. Forget any notion of a poor soul who cannot afford a proper suit of clothes! “God sees not as man sees but looks on the heart.” So what is being pointed out is that some Christians, while enjoying all the privileges of the Catholic Church, 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 to Divine revelation does not issue in the pursuit of holiness of life. In the parable

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it is suggested that *this* man might have been better off staying away in the first place rather than have insulted the host by coming in every-day street clothes.

Christ's parable did not revile the first category of people, those who rejected the invitation out of hand. They simply passed off the stage and out of the parable. (At some point they will have to face another part of Divine revelation: "No one comes to the Father except by Me.") But *this* man accepted the invitation and then treated the whole affair lightly. He is the man who actually tries to enter the Kingdom of God on His own terms, without cleaning up his act. And the parable tells us he was cast into a very unhappy place!

Concluding the parable, the king came to meet his guests. Almighty God takes particular notice of those who profess His holy religion and have their names recorded in His visible Church.

Our Lord gave this parable so we would accept its lesson. Our resolve must be to cultivate the gifts of God so we may understand and take to heart their true value for our lives. We have been invited. And this is the proper wedding garment. Let it be a *strenuous faithfulness*. Being part of the Church Militant requires we strive "against sin the world and the devil." And then when the king comes to meet his guests and we say, "Lord, I am not worthy," the Lord, Who looks on the heart as well as the deeds, will say, "Friend, go up higher."