

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

## The Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Everyone loves a party, especially one that promises food and drink of the highest quality. In the time of Jesus, wedding feasts were major parties. No expense was spared to have the best. It was important to offer guests a good experience. Like today, back then the host would be forever embarrassed if the invited guests left the banquet grumbling about the cold roast chicken or the scanty dessert. People enjoyed the wedding feast. And most would welcome an invitation to participate.

So it's surprising to hear a parable from Jesus that describes a wedding feast where the invited guests chose not to come. They weren't even interested. The excitement of working on the farm or engaging in business was more attractive. So the feast was opened to anyone wandering around town or on the road nearby. There were no restrictions. *Everyone* was invited. What's going on in this intriguing story?

### A Gospel Word for the Home

#### Matthew 22:1-14

This is a parable where we have to read between the lines. The wedding feast in the time of Jesus was a popular image for describing what it would be like when the Kingdom of God began. It would be like a jubilant wedding feast. It would be joyful, exuberant, and everyone would have a good time. Surely, no one would decline an invitation to such an event. But apparently they did. It is suggested that the original list of invitees included the elite of society. After their refusals, a Plan B list was created. Same result. No takers. Finally the doors were opened to all, commoners though they may be. It didn't matter. A welcome was extended to every passer-by. Such is God's invitation-style. All are welcome into God's kingdom.

Now what about that wedding robe? Well, it's a way of saying that when you come to the banquet, you have to do more than just appear. You have to participate. In Christian terms, it implies that just being a Christian in name alone is not enough. You have to act like one! It's the old stimulus and response pattern. Invitation (the stimulus) carries expectations (a response). We are loved by God, but we have to love God in return. Furthermore, love all that God loves, namely everyone. That is not easy!

## Parent Survival

This is a story that easily translates into family life. Being a family member carries with it a set of expectations or responsibilities. Active involvement is highly desirable. Nothing brings down parental enthusiasm more than having lazy children who expect parents to do everything. So one of the most important challenges to parents is to teach children how to actively and regularly participate in the life of the family. Some people call this "the assignment of chores." Now up to this moment in human history, no child has ever welcomed with a great smile and open arms this part of family membership. So, often there is a bit of a struggle to implement this strategy.

Each family will have its own way of doing this. There will be a variety of timetables and there will be great diversity in how this is played out in each family. Nevertheless, it's important, and while it's never been admitted by a child in the presence of parents, it's good for everyone.

*by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute*

## Car or Meal Talk

Does our family life ever feel like a party?  
Raise the question and see what ensues.

## One-Line Prayer

God of Goodness,  
Help us to feel the joy that you promised to give us by being part of your great feast of life.  
Amen.