Sunday 15 October –Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture: Isaiah 25: 6-10; Psalm 22; Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22: 1-14

*As the king had commanded, the servants went out on to the roads and collected everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

It is hard to imagine people being so unconcerned about attending a royal wedding – especially when they have been invited by the king himself! Is it that the king has become so unpopular? Or distant from his people? Or that people feel if they go to the wedding feast they are somehow setting themselves up in opposition to, say, Roman rule? We really don’t know – and particularly, if we see the king as God. The fact remains, though, that the people who were best qualified to be invited chose not to go – and the king ended up with all and sundry at the wedding feast…

* Why do you think people declined the invitation to the wedding?
* How would the king have felt on receiving the refusals – and then seeing just who did turn up?

Allow this parable to play out in your mind and heart. Like all parables, it is open to all sorts of interpretations so do not censor the way your thoughts take you. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you to new and interesting ways of seeing meaning in the parable.

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Monday 16 October – (St Hedwig or St Margaret Mary Alacoque)

Scripture: Romans 1: 1-7; Psalm 97; Luke 11: 29-32

*Jesus said, ‘On Judgement day, the Queen of the South will rise up with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.’*

Although we have many representations of Jesus in painting and sculpture, we really have no idea what he looked like. This passage suggests that he was pretty ordinary looking! It is clear that, even though he worked miracles, people look at him and see just a man – like the bloke next door. Certainly, we would think, putting Solomon and Jesus next to each other it would be clear just who was the king and who was the former carpenter! It might be interesting to speculate about whether the Queen of the South (or Queen of Sheba as she is sometimes known) would have recognised who had the greater wisdom despite appearances.

* Why do you think people could not see the greatness of the man before them?
* Do you think the Queen of the South would have recognised the power and wisdom of Jesus? And, if so, how?

Spend some time in prayer thinking about how you decide who is worth listening to – or following on social media. Ponder whether you would (honestly) have seen beyond the carpenter to the Son of God.

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Tuesday 17 October – (St Ignatius of Antioch)

Scripture: Romans 1: 16-25; Psalm 18; Luke 11: 37-41

*Jesus said, ‘Oh you Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness!’*

Jewish purity laws are, in fact, incredibly sensible. They were doing centuries ago what hygiene experts are now almost begging people to do. They put a lot of emphasis on washing – especially before meals – so for Jesus just to come in, sit down and start to eat with dirty hands would have been shocking and a bit distasteful and, to be honest, quite bad manners!

* How might you feel if someone came into your home and did not follow basic hygiene rules?
* Does being the Son of God excuse Jesus from having good manners?

Put yourself in the shoes of the Pharisee who has invited Jesus to dinner. You might like to imagine a conversation with him and see things from his point of view… What did he learn and how did this encounter change him (if at all)? Bring the Lord into the conversation and see if you can get his “take” on it too.

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Wednesday 18 October - St Luke, Evangelist

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4: 10-17; Psalm 144; Luke 10: 1-9

*Jesus said, ‘Whatever house you go into, let your first words be. “Peace to this house!” And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him.’*

St Luke was not one of the first disciples of Jesus who were all Jews. Luke was a Greek – a Gentile – and so outside that first inner circle of followers. At some point, though, someone – and the someone was probably St Paul, came to him and blessed him – and Luke responded by listening to Paul’s teaching and, eventually, being convinced enough not just to be baptised but then to accompany Paul on his journeys. He was highly educated – probably a doctor – and he uses his education to tell the story of Jesus’ earthly ministry and how the early apostles took it up after the Pentecost event.

* What do you think might have attracted Luke to Jesus?
* Which do you think you would rather be – an apostle (someone who teaches and preaches) Which d or an evangelist (who writes and shares the accounts of what Jesus and the apostles did)?

Spend some time today thinking about those early converts who came to Christianity (as it was just beginning to be called) with absolutely no preconceptions. Think about whether those first apostles had a harder or easier job than the apostles and evangelists of our own day.

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Thursday 19 October – (Ss John of Brebeuf and Isaac Jogues and their Companions or St Paul of the Cross

Scriptures: Romans 3: 21-30 Psalm 129; Luke 11: 47-54

*Jesus said, ‘Alas for you who build the tombs of the prophets, the men your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building.’*

This seems a strange way for Jesus to look at the building of tombs which were sure intended to honour the prophets not those who killed them. Jesus knew the fates of many of the prophets – and knew that his own prophetic ministry would end in his death so was perhaps a bit cynical that the people who were honouring dead prophets would be so blind when it came to recognising the living one in front of them. Jesus often speaks more harshly to people than we might feel comfortable with but, perhaps, his hope is that it will make them think and realise that their actions are sometimes motivated by less than pure motives and need to be rethought.

* Why do you think people were building tombs for the prophets in Jesus’ time?
* Is there a modern-day equivalent to building tombs and shrines for people who, in their lifetime, were seen as trouble-makers or worse?

Spend time today thinking of modern-day prophets and how uncomfortable they can make the people in power feel. Do you have a particular favourite (living or dead)? Reflect on why they inspire you – and how you might honour them by picking up on their witness and example and allowing them to influence your daily life more strongly.

*KT*

Friday 20 October

Scripture: Romans 4: 1-8; Psalm 31; Luke 12: 1-7

* *Jesus said, ‘Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God’s sight.’*

Most of us go through much of our lives without really being aware of God’s great love for us. We tend to make God in our own image and likeness rather than the other way round! Because we find it hard to love other people we tend to assume that God finds it hard too. Because we find it hard to love ourselves properly, we assume that God cannot either. Because we barely notice the birds and other wild creatures, we forget that God actually knows each of them – probably by a name (however that works for sparrows). God does not see a flock but a multitude of beloved little creatures. And as far as humans are concerned, God does not see a crowd but individual and much-loved sons and daughters.

* How easy or hard do you find it to trust that God loves you unconditionally?
* If you are more important than a sparrow – what responsibilities come with that?

If the opportunity arises, spend time today watching sparrows and other birds and animals – thinking about the fact that, as you look at them, God is doing the same – with great love and delight… and that God looks on you with similar love and delight. Bring thoughts together in a journal – or a poem – or a drawing.

*KT*

Saturday 21 October

Scriptures: Romans 4: 13, 16, 18; Psalm 104; Luke 12: 8-12

*Jesus said, ‘I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of other people, the Son of Man will declare himself for them in the presence of the angels.’*

We can be rather wary of sharing our faith with others. Perhaps we have had a bad experience – or it is simply the case that we feel it is a bit intrusive or somehow bad manners to talk about Jesus and the Church. Occasionally, people will object – particularly if your speaking of Jesus comes with attempts to ram your truth down someone else’s throat. But, in general, if you are simply honest and open about the love God has for you and how you are responding to that, people will be a little intrigued and, sometimes, even envious. They may wrap it up in apparent indifference or a joke but your quiet certainty of being loved – as they are – may well be part of a greater plan that God has for bringing the good news of his love to them.

* When have you found yourself able to talk about Jesus in a way that was loving and exciting for you and for your listener?
* Who has spoken to you of the love they experience from God – and how did you feel hearing it?

Bring to mind people who seem able to share their faith in Jesus in ways that are inspiring and attractive. Reflect on how they do it… and then see if you can learn how to do this yourself in a way that is authentic to you.

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