



28th Week of the Year 10th/11th October 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength”

Facebook sends reminders of events you posted a year or more ago, events you may treasure. This week I received a picture of the marriage of Katie and Ashley I celebrated four years ago: a beautiful picture of the three of us at the moment of signing the Register at St George and St Teresa in Dorridge: something to treasure. I reposted it on Facebook, saying an even more special occasion recently was celebrating the Baptism of Barney Patrick the first child of Katie and Ashley, the day I put the white Baptism Shawl around his shoulders. Both of these events are most relevant to the Gospel we read this Sunday about the Wedding Feast

How could those invited to the wedding be so caught up in business and worldly affairs that they refused to accept the invitation? The story highlights the growing confrontation between Jesus and the Religious Leaders. The image of the Wedding Feast was one of the key images in Old Testament Times for God’s Reign, and His invitation, an open table for all, to be part of His Kingdom. The Religious Leaders then were aware it was directed at them, and their refusal to accept the invitation Jesus was offering; they were caught up in their own selfish concerns. It is a story that we are meant to take on board too: to think about our priorities, to consider what we put first in our lives? Reading a refreshing article in the Guardian recently entitled “Billionaire Chuck Berry achieves goal of giving away his fortune”, I was struck by the priorities of this Irish American who amassed a fortune from his duty-free shopping empire: he found his greatest happiness in giving away his money. An extraordinary true story: a man who has inspired people like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet to establish the Giving Pledge, where they give at least half their wealth to charity. On reflection, we can see ourselves getting so caught up in our business and work that we do not take time for what should be a priority: we don’t spend time in prayer, with our family, or attending to more spiritual and caring matters because we make the affairs of the world our whole life!

This Parable questioned the lifestyle of the Religious Leaders, and it questions ours too: where are we going, do we make time for the things of God and His Rule, His Kingdom? At the end of today’s Gospel you have what seems a strange incident. After calling everyone to the Wedding Feast, the king throws out the man not wearing the wedding garment. Going back to the happy occasion of Barney’s Baptism: I placed the white garment around his shoulders and enjoined on him the responsibility of carrying that garment unstained into everlasting life, the day many years from now, when he will join all of us at the Throne of God, the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (beautiful imagery often used by painters to portray our final destiny). To understand this part of the story we need to know that it was the custom at Wedding Feasts in those days for the host to issue a Wedding Garment to each guest to wear for the occasion. Wearing it was

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respecting the Host, not to wear it was a slight. Hence the response of the King in the Gospel passage.

It reminds us that with the invitation and accepting it goes a certain responsibility on our part. Yes, we have undertaken our journey to God's Kingdom in Baptism, but our final entry to the Feast requires something of us. It seemed to me that Feeney in the Guardian article has got that message; the Religious Leaders at the time of Jesus had not. They were 'closed' to what was being asked of them.

In this period of the Pandemic one of the interesting things for me is the way Political Leaders, like our Prime Minister, come towards the position being taken by Pope Francis. "We cannot go back to the way things were" said Boris in his address to the Conservative Party Conference, speaking of our need to train people for jobs and to be concerned for the less well off in society.

I think Barclay, the Scripture Scholar, puts it well for me: "we can be so busy living, we fail to make a life". There is no invitation more important than the one to the Feast in the Kingdom of God. Accepting it is a challenge to our way of life; I am encouraged by these words of St Paul "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength."

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