



## 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

### Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

**Sunday 11 October 2020  
Sacred Heart Parish, Thornlie**

Today's gospel, which presents one of Jesus's parables about the kingdom of heaven, is best understood not as a literal presentation of what the kingdom of heaven is like, but rather as an allegory which seeks to teach some fundamental lessons. We should not, then, imagine that Jesus is presenting an accurate representation of God in the figure of the king who invites guests to the wedding feast. Nothing in the Gospels would lead us to believe that God treats his people the way the king treats those people who did not come to his son's wedding.

Nevertheless, within the context of a graphic and exciting if rather violent story, Jesus is inviting us to reflect on the generosity of God who calls us to the joy of the kingdom, and the way in which we respond to that call, perhaps with initial enthusiasm which soon grows cold, or perhaps with disinterest, or perhaps for a time, or even permanently, with an attitude of rejection.

A gospel passage such as ours today speaks powerfully to us all. The fact that we are here in the church this morning is an indication that, in one way or another, we have become aware of God's invitation and have, at least initially and with some enthusiasm, accepted that invitation. For most of us that invitation was first issued at our baptism and accepted for us by our parents. It is quite possible that we have simply presumed on our right to be a part of the Church but never really committed ourselves fully to what that means. In that sense we might be rather like the man who finds himself at the wedding feast but who is not dressed correctly. In the parable it does not seem to be the man's fault that he has not come prepared for the feast. In our case it is, perhaps, a little different. Perhaps the man did not know what the correct dress was. I am not sure we can say the same about ourselves.

The real question posed by today's gospel is whether or not we have really understood just how wonderful this invitation to the wedding feast really is, what is offered to us through this invitation, and what is asked of us if we accept the invitation.

In the parable the last man to be invited is ultimately rejected because he has not put on the right clothes. If we were to ask ourselves what the right clothes are for membership in the kingdom of God we might think of some words from Saint Paul:

*Clothe yourselves as God's chosen ones, holy and much loved, with compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*



These words of Saint Paul reveal him to be a man with a profound understanding of the mystery of Christ. Here, as in so many other places, Saint Paul provides a beautiful, challenging, and yet very practical description of what a true Christian community looks like. In that sense he has described with great accuracy exactly what this parish community is called to. And in doing that he has offered a powerful tool to you as a parish community to evaluate how you are doing, to thank God for the ways in which you are already this kind of community, and to pray and commit yourselves to continuing along this path so that everyone can say of the parish here at Thornlie, *“See how these Christians love one another”*.

For Nicholas, who today is formally accepted by me as a candidate for the ordained ministry here in the Archdiocese of Perth, these very same words of Saint Paul describe his vocation as a Christian, as a seminarian, and especially as a man who seeks to be a living image of Jesus the Good Shepherd among God’s people, for this is what a priest is called to be in God’s Church. Indeed, we might say that the very qualities listed by Saint Paul - compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience - which are, of course, the very qualities which Jesus displayed in his own life, are precisely the qualities which, through Nicholas’s acceptance formally as a candidate for priesthood in our archdiocese, he must now re-commit himself to developing, with renewed energy and with the help of God’s grace, as each day goes by.

It is an absolutely fundamental dimension of our Catholic understanding of the role of the priest that he is ordained to be a humble servant of God’s people, never, as Saint Peter puts it in one of his letters, a dictator over the flock entrusted to him, but rather an example for the whole flock to follow. This is a challenging and demanding ministry to take on. Only men with great courage and humility will be able to live up to its demands. It is a way of life that calls for a completely different approach to leadership and authority from that which we see in much of the secular world around us – and, of course, it is fatally easy for those called to the priesthood to perhaps unconsciously model themselves on the world’s understanding of leadership and authority rather than on the gospel understanding.

For us to be faithful we need you, our people, to help us. Thank you for the encouragement you have given to Nick during his time here among you. Thank you for your prayerful support of him. And to those of you who have, with respect and honesty and goodwill, pointed out to Nick ways in which he might better be a servant of the gospel, a special thank you.

Please continue to support him, to encourage him, to counsel him, and to pray for him. He is travelling a challenging and winding road with faith and courage. Please don’t let him make that journey alone.