

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
(Isaiah 25:6-10a / Matthew 22:1-14)
12.10.2014

They were not interested...

Why did the invited guests not come to the wedding feast? We are told that “they were not interested”.

The Greek expression used here by St Matthew is found many times in the New Testament. It could have been translated by: “They did not care” or “They paid no heed”. Eugene Peterson translates it as: “They shrugged their shoulders and went off” (*The Message*).

It is quite surprising to realise that the invited guests were not opposed to the celebration; they just did not pay attention, they did not want to be bothered with it; maybe they did not see the point of going to the wedding feast! They were not interested.

Today in our European societies, there are some Christians who are afraid of what they see as the invasion of Islam, or of the religions from the East who attract some people from a variety of Christian backgrounds. And yet personally I do not think that this movement constitutes the main challenge for our Christian denominations. I would be more worried by the disinterest, the indifference, dare we say, the kind of religious apathy which prevails amongst many of our peers. Many of them are no longer against the Church or against God, they just do not see the point of bothering with what they consider an outdated institution, or a remote and useless divinity.

However it would be unfair to point the finger at others and to consider ourselves untouched by such indifference and apathy. Too many in our Churches do not want to be bothered. Too many among us are happy to settle for a cosy form of Christianity with no sense of personal conversion.

One day as I was talking with a young priest about celebrating Mass meaningfully and properly, he shared with me the following experience:

“When I arrived in my new parish, I suggested that we could introduce a procession at the offertory, and I was told: ‘Father we do not want Mass to be too long here, we want a plain Mass’”.

A verse from the book of Revelations comes to my mind: “You are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot (...). You are lukewarm” (3:15-16).

We are all tempted to become lukewarm, petty and stuck in the mud of our habits and desire for security.

The prophets of the Old Testament relentlessly called the people to pay attention to the Lord. Through the prophet Zechariah the Lord declares: “Do not be like your ancestors (...) who did not hear or heed me, says the Lord” (1:4).

Jesus’ parable speaks to us in many ways: do we really pay attention to God’s calls in our lives? The Lord calls us today, and everyday, into his presence. He waits for our attention and our answer. His voice will not come to us like the one of a heavenly *big brother*; and yet in many ways, and using many channels, the Lord invites us today to do what is right and good, to move on and to follow him not where we would like to go but wherever he goes.

As Christians, in no way can we remain just centred on our small concerns and preoccupations. We are made for more than that. The Lord wants us to grow and as St Paul reminds us to “comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Ep 3:18-19). We have to be stretched and, indeed, this is not always a very pleasant experience; and yet it is the only way for us to “come to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ep 4:13).

Before concluding there is still another question for us: if many of our contemporaries are not interested in what we say, supposedly, in the name of the Lord, could it not be that we do not always convey how life-giving and relevant the Good News is?

Let us be honest, sometimes our Christian discourses and statements sound a bit obscure, disconnected from reality and judgemental; they seem to answer questions that people do not even ask.

Before we ever tell our brothers and sisters in humanity anything about God, the challenge for us is to be alive, afire with the Spirit, attentive to his promptings and our hearts wide open (cf. 2Co 6:13) to whatever he may ask of us.

Bl. John Henry Newman reminded us that “God has committed some work to you and me which he has not committed to another. Each one of us is a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created us for naught” (*Meditations*). This is why “all through life he is calling us. (...) Whether we obey his voice or not, he graciously calls us still. He calls us from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us” (*Parochial*).

Let us all pay heed to God’s call. As we read in the book of Proverbs: “Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord” (16:20 NIV)