The imagery in today's Gospel parable is that of a wedding. OT.YrA.28Sun
Not an ordinary wedding but the wedding of a prince,
the son of a king.
That wedding would have been a spectacular event
and an invitation would have been prized.
However, the invited guests refuse to come to the wedding.
Not only do they once refuse…but twice refuse.
Some refuse politely and some even kill the king's messengers.
The king is determined to fill the wedding hall with guests
So, he sends his servants out
to invite anyone and everyone, the good and the bad.
The wedding halls were filled
And when the king came in to meet the guests
he saw a man not dressed in the proper wedding garments.
The king questioned him, "My friend, how is it that you came here
not dressed in a wedding garment?"
This man had no answer for entering the wedding hall so poor dressed.
Then the king said to his servants,
"Bind the man and cast out into the dark night."

The imagery in today's Gospel parable sounds sobering.
What did this parable mean to the people in Jesus' time?
And what does this parable mean to us today?
Stories and parables are usually understood
in terms of what is going on at the time the story is told.
This is the 3rd Sunday Gospel in a row that starts out…
"Jesus spoke to the chief priests and elders."
They are the target audience.
The king in this parable is God.

The celebration is for his Son, Jesus.
The servants that are sent by God are the prophets of Israel.
The invited guests that refuse the invitation to the wedding
are the chief priests and elders
that tell the Jewish people not to listen to Jesus.

God then sends an invitation to everyone on the main crossroads
which means literally the whole world…
whether they are good or bad people.
The man that comes without the wedding garment
symbolizes anyone who is indifferent to the Gospel or to Jesus.
This man will come for the free food
but has no love for God or his Son, Jesus.
The fellow who did not dress in the wedding garment is significant.
The wedding garment in Biblical times
symbolizes a change in life or conversion.
The wedding garment was to say, "I have come
to celebrate your good fortune and I am happy to be here with you."

In this parable Jesus is trying to tell the people of his time
that God has invited them to his Kingdom of Heaven,
but this invitation requires a positive response…
and that response is to hear the Gospel of Jesus
and have a conversion of heart.

So what about hearing this story today…2000 years later.
How does this story make sense in 2023?
Well, it is the same message we hear.
The Kingdom of Heaven is to those…even today…
that enter a relationship with Jesus

and are willing to change their heart
to become the best person they can be.
This is the invitation we hear in the Gospel.
This invitation is for every one of you.

Pope Francis is moving our Church in this direction again.
There is a synod going on right now in Rome.
(You are invited to go to the Vatican Website and read the Daily Meeting.)
Let me talk briefly about the synod.
Synod is a Greek word meaning "assembly".

This Synod Gathering in Rome includes not just 360 Bishops,
but over 200 voting women and lay people, for the first time.
These gathered faithful will discern how the Holy Spirit is moving
through us to outline the future of our Church
and to faithfully fulfill our mission to evangelize the whole world.
On the agenda are issues including teachings
on sexual and medical ethics,
and emphasis on social causes such as the plight of migrants
and protection of the environment.
The synod is an advisory body and is expected to present
formal proposals after a second and concluding session next year.
Proposals must be accepted by the pope before they can take effect.
Pope Francis reminds us that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone,
not just cardinals, bishops and priests.

Francis also stated at his election,
"The Church is called to come out of herself
and go to the peripheries, not only of the geographical sense,
but also go to the existential peripheries…those in the misery of sin…

of pain…of injustice…of religious indifference…of thought…
of all concerns."
We just heard those very words in today's Gospel.
"Go out therefore into the main roads
and invite to the feast whomever you find.
Gather all…bad and good alike."
And the halls of Heaven will filled with guests.

At Mass this weekend Baby Isaac Lim
will put on his wedding garment for his Baptism.
At Mass this weekend Glenda Manweiler
will receive the Rite of Welcome garment
as she starts her journey to be Catholic.

The wedding garments underline the importance
of not only saying "Yes" to Christ,
but also living according to his values.
It is one thing to present oneself for Baptism;
it is another thing to live daily the Christian way of life.
Not only do our church doors need to be open
but our hearts need to be open also.

Let me ask you……besides answering God's invitation to the feast…
what is your job?
Are we just present guests…or…are we also the ones doing the inviting?
Are we only here for the meal…or…
do we don a wedding garment and make change?
Let us enter this wedding and listen to the words of Jesus.
Let us dare to challenge the norms of our day…
religious…political…economic…and social.

Let us do it even at great cost. Let us rejoice in the world we live in.
Let us cherish the freedoms we enjoy.
Let us make our church…our town…our country…our world……
The Kingdom of God.