10am Sunday 11 October 2026

Matthew 22:1-14 – an invitation more generous than we could ever imagine

Edoardo Fanfani

As I was looking at today's Gospel parable from Matthew, I could not help but think of an episode that happened while I was in elementary school. Towards one of the final years, most of our class was being confirmed, the class was divided across two local parishes, and as parents and children do, parties were organized and we invited one another along.

One of my then closest friends invited the whole class to his party. Everyone seemed keen to go. I knew people were attending one another's parties, and sadly it seemed like everyone was keen to attend what they considered to be the most popular kids' parties. My friend came from a different background, his family hadn't been in the country for long, while people generally liked him, he perhaps wasn't the most popular in the class.

My mother was a wonderful woman, and I will always be thankful that she strongly suggested I would go. When I arrived at his party, I sadly found out no one else had bothered to go, as it was clear after a couple of hours, even his other best friend did not show up. My friend's family had prepared much food from their local culture. It was sad, I was upset. My friend was one that always brought presents to anyone's party, no matter whether his family could afford that or not.

Yet, when I arrived, I noticed one thing. I found out his family worked for a very wealthy family, whose enormous palatial house provided the setting for an extraordinary party. The family had hosted the entire feast. There was a swimming pool, enormous lawns where we could run around and play… the host was incredibly kind and humble… he even gave us a ride on one of his impressive fast cars. I was so happy for my friend. This turned out to be a fantastic party. Our schoolmates had missed a lot. I made sure to let them know the following day at school…

What I remember most about that day was how upset I was for my friend. So angry that so many classmates had ignored my friend after he invited them all. After his family had gone through all that trouble. I was upset because someone had opened their doors, someone was generous, and yet hardly anyone bothered to come.

I wonder whether there is something of that feeling in the parable that Jesus tells us today. He tells us that a king prepared a banquet for his son, providing amazing food, setting up a table of honor, then sends the servants out to summon the invited guests. Yet, no one shows up. And so, the king sends more servants, explaining that the feast is ready, that everything has been prepared.

Still, no guest shows up. Some go back to their work, while others even kill the servants. Eventually, the king sends his servants into the streets to collect as many as possible, both good and bad, until the wedding hall is full. Giving an extraordinary picture of generosity that he wants everyone to share in.

So even if the original guests do not come, the invitation does not disappear, the doors opened wider. I think this brings us to what Jesus is trying to tell us. Sometimes. God's invitation is more generous than we can imagine.

In our reading from Isaiah, we heard of a feast prepared by God for all peoples, where death is destroyed, every tear wiped away, and the disgrace of his people removed. It is a vision of life, rather than death, one of joy rather than sorrow, and a place at the table rather than exclusion.

In Jesus' parable, the invitation goes out far beyond those who were expecting it. Yet, things become uncomfortable when the king finds a man without a wedding garment. If the invitation is free, then why does the garment matter… one might think.

The invitation is not a prize to those who proved themselves worthy. God invites us into a new way of living. We cannot receive mercy while refusing to show it. We cannot celebrate generosity if we close our hearts to others or pray for peace while being indifferent to the suffering of our neighbor.

Paul's letter to the Philippians helps us understand this response. He invites us to rejoice in the Lord, to show gentleness and to give thanks. God invites us to seek for that truth which is worthy of praise. These are not just ways for us to earn a place at the feast, but signs that allow God to transform us.

Perhaps, this is what the wedding garment represents. It is not a uniform, but a life shaped by grace. God's grace unfolds in ordinary moments: saying "I am sorry", showing patience, extending kindness, or indeed, by noticing those who have been left out.

Thinking back of my friend's party, his family had prepared something wonderful, invited everyone, yet the people he wanted there were absent. I can only imagine why our classmates did not come. I do remember how it felt to see someone I cared about, being let down by the same people whom he wanted to include. Thankfully, he was happy I was there. I think I was more upset than he was which looking back makes me happy.

Perhaps, this can give us a glimpse of God's generosity. His invitation is an invitation into community and our relations with each other, perhaps it is an invitation to recognizing each other's worth and making room for them.

Isaiah's promise reaches further still. He says: God will swallow up death and wipe away every tear... We know those who experience grief, anxiety, exclusion, we know we cannot solve their problems, but the hope we all have in Christ tells us that death and sorrow shall not have that final word. God is preparing a feast for a creation made whole at last. Every time we gather at the table of the Lord, we receive a foretaste of that promise.

Soon, we will come to the Eucharist, not because we are worthy, but because we are sinners, and Christ invites us as such. We bring our joys, our sorrows, our faith and doubts, failures and hopes, ready to receive God's love every day. We are not here today to leave as we were when we arrived, but to be fed, forgiven, and renewed. So that that love we receive may become visible in us.

The invitation is free. God's grace cannot be earned, but it does call us to respond. Let us accept this invitation, let us join the feast, and let us then go into the world determined to make room for others, offering kindness rather than indifference, and sharing in that generosity we have received. For the God who invites us to his table, promised to wipe away every tear, and his mercies are new every morning.

Amen.