

## St Pius-St Anthony 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year A

Thinking about this failed banquet on its first attempt, made me remember an awesome 'lemonade from lemons' story from a couple years ago. It was in the Indianapolis newspaper, The IndyStar, about an engaged couple Sarah Cummins and Logan Araujo. They were set to marry in July 2017. Something private and tragic happened that led to them calling it all off. Because of nonrefundable catering and entertainment contracts, and two years planning (to tune of \$30,000), Sarah thought some good purpose should come from the couple's pain, and cancellation. So she talked with her one time fiancé, and they agreed to bring good to others out of their heartbreak. They called local homeless shelters, and worked through the shelter managers to bring in 150 homeless people by bus to enjoy the plated dinner and entertainment at the Ritz Charles Event Center in Carmel Indiana for their now transformed wedding banquet. It was the treat of the year or maybe a lifetime for some of the homeless folks. What a better result than loss!

We get another parable from Jesus tonight. I find that some parables are comforting (Good Samaritan), some are challenging (Prodigal Son), some are funny (My two sons-one said no one said yes- neither did what they said- maybe parents say typical to us), but some are downright scary... like today's wedding feast parable (Matt 22:1-14). And 'by scary' I mean a specific kind of scary; not like 'judgement day-get ready for the end' scary, but scary like violence jumps you out of blue-never saw it coming scary, like when your airplane roof tears off in turbulence and your whole seat gets sucked out top the hole. Or do you remember the shock of seeing out of the blue, the I-35W Mississippi River bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota collapse into the river back August 1, 2007. Who saw it coming? To me, such sudden blow up violence happens in today's parable following a simple banquet invitation. Refuse it, fine, just refuse it. But why with all the nonsense bloodshed that results. So, let me deal with that a second first, and then we get on to the real message of the heavenly banquet in God's kingdom! If you are an old Western Movie fan, I call it 'The bad, The ugly first'; then we get to the good.' So, what led to the invitees suddenly turning violently lethal on the messengers (instead of just saying, no thanks, bye!). They laid hold the servants, mistreated them, and killed them (Matt 22:6). But oh it is not over, senselessness meets senselessness in escalation, when the king turns around enraged and "sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city" (Matt 22:7). I'm sure there are people in the city who had nothing to do with anything. They were just living their simple lives & get caught up in this mess. That is the scary part here. I want to say, "Keep the

knives and fire in the kitchen. Please.” Keep it constructive. Again, that part of this parable scares me. Where does that all come from? I think Jesus is pointing out how easily *humans get out of control*, not able to handle rage and anger. He seems to be warning, “Anger-danger! (as the robot cautions Will Robinson from *Lost in Space*) Get control of yourselves.” I see this warning better when I recall that Jesus directs this parable to “the chief priests and elders”. Why? Because who is going to turn Him over to the murderous Romans, but them? They will conduct a sham trial and send him off to Pilate with all kinds of false accusations. Did they know it would lead to death? Maybe-maybe not. But it is all the more reason, why Jesus here is warning them against unleashing that bear of violence that they may not be able to contain. Sadly they don’t heed his warning, but Jesus gives it to them anyway. To help. So I chalk up, this insane violence in the parable to Jesus realistically laying out to the chief priests and elders what they are going to be responsible for if they don’t watch their inflammatory rhetoric. (Timely?) They think they are only getting rid of a one-time prophet named Jesus that is exposing their temple financial scam, but within 35 years there is going to be no temple, and the city of Jerusalem will be burnt down beyond recognition--because of their selfish carelessness in not realizing what Jesus was bringing to them. Again, this work of God’s banquet was all done/prepared; All they had to do was join in & come. Sad! But, enough of that reality-that’s the bad, ugly part.

Let’s get to the good, main course now, the heavenly banquet. The King said, “Everyone is invited”. Sounds great! He told the servants to go into the city and bring to the banquet everyone hungry, tired or huddled in the streets. So some refused the invitation. Fine. Their loss. God is moving on. The banquet is still ready. And there are plenty of hungry people out there that would love to be seated at the table in heaven. So the door is flung wide open. Come on in! Oh, but there is one more detail to cover: What happened that is wrong to make one man be bounced out. Does that strike you as odd? Man out! What did he do wrong? The messengers were told to bring in everyone ‘good and bad’ alike (Matt 22:10). So what is with the distinctions now? The man’s problem turns out that he is not in the usual ‘wedding garment’. You may ask, “But, what if he is poor can’t afford such special clothes?” No excuse, because the host provides the special clothes. They are given to you at the door (like our baptismal robes and identifying mark of the cross on us coming into God’s House). So this man’s presence, means he must have come in a back door or flat out refused to blend in with family wearing the special robe. He didn’t meet/acknowledge

the groom-bride at the door like in a typical receiving line at wedding reception. At the main door, is where the special garments were provided all the guests as gifts. "You come to my house, I thank you and give you gifts. Here take this robe, this gift scarf or tie as a sign of our fellowship. Gifts were given to mark the guests at the door, like party favors-as when you know who is in the birthday party group because they are all wearing 'pointed hats' or all the guests are given same kazoo noisemakers, bells, or some marker like flower corsages or boutonnieres. On a larger scale, this is seen when bridesmaids or groomsmen are given special commemorative shirts, glasses, ballcaps, by the groom and bride for just being in the wedding. These markers identify everyone as belonging to the same occasion (no party crashers) And the handout point was the door entry to greet the host and be recognized. No slipping in/cheating. I also think of this one man tossed out as the way Jesus is warning His own disciples not to 'presume' their own way, thinking that 'anything goes' in the kingdom. No, it is His Kingdom, His Banquet. We are only guests. To enter the heavenly banquet, we have to 'clothe ourselves in Him' acknowledging Him and trying our best to wear what he gives us and look like what he presents to us; to say what He says, and to do what He does. That will be our mark, our recognition & welcome at the door by Jesus. Our doing what Jesus would do, is what lets us be recognized by Him and welcomed in!