

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A
Party! Party! Party!

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Matthew is big on allegory in this disturbing, sometimes absurdly unrealistic parable full of unexpected twists and turns (*Matt 22:1-14*). Taken literally it reads as an uncompromising piece of scripture, without wriggle room, about ungrateful invitees, murder of the King's messengers, the King's revenge and finally the seemingly harsh ejection of the guest from the crossroads who isn't dressed appropriately.

What is Matthew saying for our benefit here? Distinguished theologian, Karl Barth, tells us, "In the last resort, it all boils down to the fact that the invitation is to a feast, and that he who does not obey and come accordingly, and therefore festively, declines and spurns the invitation no less than those who are unwilling to obey and appear at all." (*Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, II/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 588*). Rather than God, who loves us all absolutely, infinitely and intimately, rejecting us, we with our free will can reject or refuse him.

Who, invited to a sumptuous feast, an amazing party, then refuses to participate? Well – us, if we are casually coasting along without dressing in our party dress and getting with the program. If we find ourselves at this wonderful party of life in God, then we need to be active in it. Luke's gospel tells us (*Luke 12:48*) "To whom much is given, much will be required". If we have been given much, as we have, in family, nation, talents, wealth, health, knowledge and time, then we are responsible for how we use those gifts. All has been given to the ill-clad guest but he is refusing to participate. To party!

To party with the Lord is to fully embrace our gifts; using them as best we can for the glory of God and the well-being of our neighbour. How can I take up my invitation; shake off my rags of injustice, my less good self, and dress in the clothes of a new, more loving person?