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“Everything is ready; come to the feast” (Matthew 22:4)

Twenty-eight Sunday of the Year

Isa 25:6-10a; Ps 23; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Matt 22:1-14

In 1997, a TV series called “Nothing Sacred” appeared briefly to depict the gritty reality of life in an urban parish and how its pastoral team tried to minister to the chaotic and often unorthodox dilemmas of real people. The show lasted less than a season, boycotted by the ultra-orthodox “Catholic League” that pressured the network and its sponsors to pull it.

The TV parish had many of the characteristics of Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker houses, including the inclusive spirit that also generated controversy and efforts to shut them down. [In Episode 2](#), an impromptu wedding reception is held in the soup kitchen. The series had echoes years later when the national news picked up the awe-stirring story of a bride who, when her groom failed to show at the church, decided to open up her prepaid wedding reception to the homeless.

Today’s Parable of the Wedding has both the exuberance of Jesus’ inclusivity and the shadow of orthodoxy hanging over Matthew’s church in Antioch. The parable is poised between the rich openness of Isaiah’s prophecy of universal salvation and the

later needs of the young church to interpret the “Good News” of Jesus in the light of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE as the passing of God’s covenant from Judaism to Christianity. The parable was allegorized to include rules for excluding members who dissent from practice and doctrine, who come without “wedding garments” or in another parable about bridesmaids, without extra oil for their lamps.

The parable has echoes in Catholic controversies today about whether certain people should be refused Communion for second marriages without annulments or for their political views. Lost in these debates are the original and undeniably radical views of Jesus, who ate with sinners, scandalized his contemporary religionists by stretching the rules to serve people’s actual needs, who rejected all violence, ignored borders and caste membership and, at the last, gave his life to save everyone, including the lost sheep and prodigal sons and daughters.

The wedding feast Jesus dreamed of is described in Matthew 25, when the guest list to the nuptial covenant of God’s love includes the hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, sick, undocumented, the persecuted *and* those who serve them, whether they know it or not that they are serving Jesus himself. Nothing is sacred here because everything is sacred when all distinctions and divisions disappear in the unconditional and extravagant love God has for everyone.

If you have time to explore this further, here is a link to “Nothing Sacred” and to the church Jesus intended, and to the kind of quality television we might have now if the orthodoxy police had not shown up.

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