Spirituality
Scripture for Life
Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



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by Sr. Mary M. McGlone

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What's the difference between an invitation and a call? We might be invited to the game on Sunday, to a party, or even to be godparent to the child of a friend. When does an invitation ("Will you marry me?") become a call? How do we know our "calling in life"?

These are some of the questions that spring from Jesus' story of the king who got stood up when he threw a wedding party for his son.

First of all, the setting. Matthew makes the king the protagonist in this story. Think about this: While you might wiggle out of a neighbor's invitation to a baby shower or potluck, in Jesus' day, an invitation from the king required acceptance — to do otherwise implied insurrection.

So, here we have this king all ready to show off his wealth and generosity by throwing an impressive feast for his son, probably the crown prince.

## Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 15, 2023

Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 23
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14

This is no small affair. When the menu includes calves and fattened cattle, we're talking about 750-pound calves and cattle that weigh about twice that much — not counting vegetables and wine! It's hard to calculate the insult resulting from making such preparations only to have the people you want to impress decide that they've got something better to do.

You can bet that they weren't thinking that the king was going to rule for long — nor that his heir would become a person of great power. Dissing him showed that they were counting on a change of regime.

The king was not to be deterred. If the "right people" weren't going to be with him, he would find others and make them right.

That's a description of salvation and a retake on Isaiah 25's mountaintop banquet for "all peoples." These stories portray God's future as a blowout feast for everyone humble enough to accept the fact that they can never deserve the invitation and who, at the same time, know that the invitation itself makes them worthy.

What if we thought about the images of these feasts as call stories? Most of the vocation stories we hear stress the leaving everything to follow. The fishers left their nets and boats, the women who followed Jesus left their reputations and gave from their own wealth to follow. Jesus himself warned that each would need to take up their own cross.

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Nevertheless, the Gospels never present the reign of God as an experience of fast and abstinence. Jesus himself admitted that others called him a glutton and a drunkard (Matthew 11:19). Jesus was never accused of being too strict or ascetic!

What if we thought of our calling, our vocation, as an invitation to "the good life" in the sense of a life of fulfillment, joy, celebration, commitment, laughter and love? Isn't that what the folks who filled the king's banquet hall found?

We might think of this party as a mirror of the sacraments of initiation. Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, symbolized by the acceptance of the invitation, the wedding gown and participating in the feast. Here, "the bad and good alike" can enjoy everything the king has prepared for them. You can imagine them dancing and singing, going back for seconds (or thirds) and popping petit fours into their mouths each time they glide past the dessert table.

This is our invitation, our vocation. All it costs, as in Isaiah 55, is the willingness to participate fully: to accept the invitation, put on the attitudes symbolized by the wedding dress, and then fully enjoy what is offered.

Let's go for it!

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