

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

THE MARRIAGE AND THE MISSION

This Sunday we are blessed to have Father John Amankwah with us to speak about the Church in his country of Ghana for the annual missionary appeal. Today's Gospel is worth further reflection in relation to mission.

The king invites his guests to the wedding of his Son. Unlike an invitation from your second cousin, which you can skip if you send them a blender, response to a royal invitation is a sign of loyalty. To ignore the invitation is a slap in the face to the king. Yet this king is not concerned so much about his feelings as he is that every guest attend, so he sends out other messengers who find that those invited won't even pull themselves away from their everyday lives – farming and business – to celebrate with the king. In acts tantamount to treason they harass and kill the royal announcers. There is a limit to the king's patience, and the murder of his messengers has crossed the line; they are punished, and rightly so.

You don't need a doctorate in the Scriptures to see that the king is God; the invitees are the leaders of the people, and the banquet is the wedding feast of Jesus and his people. (By the way, they already received a blender.) If you think back to the writings of the prophets, the restoration of the Chosen People is often likened to a wedding feast where God and his People are wed in a new and eternal covenant. Since the invited guests abandon God (and do so at great peril) the doors of the reception hall are thrown open to all.

Now we often think of the wedding of the Lamb as beginning at the end of time, but God always gives us a foretaste of things eternal. The banquet has begun on earth when we come to the divine reception hall to hear God speak, and we are fed with finest wheat, the Bread of Life, and the richest wine, the Blood of the Son of God. The banquet continues outside the reception hall when we go forth, happily fed and sated with God's own Son, and invite others to this unending wedding feast, giving credibility

to our invitation by how we live out the wishes of the King. In fact, our participation in the banquet does not stop when we leave the hall, but continues as we receive and share God's continual gifts in everyday life. The banquet is **life lived in God**. (And to quote Mame, "Life is a banquet, and most poor b*** are starving.")

Then there's the incident of the worst dressed man at the wedding. One could argue that the king had these people come to the wedding right off the road. What if this man were traveling and had no wedding clothes with him? What if he were poor and the only clothes he had were on his back? But that is not the case; he was reduced to silence, meaning he had no excuse. The deeper meaning of the clothing is not a matter of style. Remember at baptism when the person is clothed in a white garment, and the words, "You have put on Christ; see in this garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity, and bring that dignity unstained into the life of heaven." The garment the man was to wear was not satin or a poly-blend; it was Christ himself and the virtues of the kingdom: heartfelt compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love (cf., Col.3:12-14) that he was to wear. We are to wear Christ all the time; this garment does not cost money; it is free to everyone. While God invited everyone, good or bad, there comes the point where we have to make a choice to choose for the good, and be attired in virtue to stand before the Lord.

This may seem far from missionary appeal, but in fact it is not. If we wear the wedding garment of Christ, with generosity of heart, we reach out to those who need support in coming to the banquet and living the banquet. As in all of Christian life, what we receive we are to give in prayer, in talent, in time, and in treasure. This week giving to Fr. John's community of faith and next week to the work of the missionary work of the entire church is what keeps our wedding garments beautiful and worthy of the King of king.