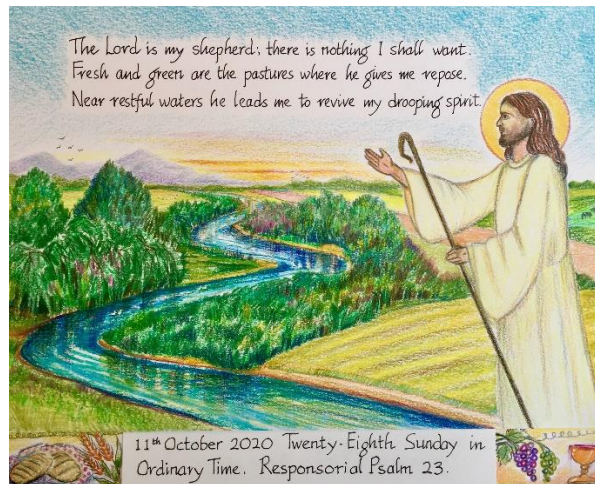


Homily for 28th Sunday of the Year.



Artwork by Moya Hogarth

Over the last three weeks we have been presented with three parables preached by Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem. He is countering the criticism being levelled at him by the priests and Levites who are challenging him as to his authority to preach. Jesus is not concerned by their taunting, but he challenges them in turn by what authority do they profess to uphold the law.

The message of the royal wedding banquet which we listened to in the gospel reading today is clear. God invites the people of Israel to his wedding banquet in heaven but despite the fact that they have enjoyed his favour over so many generations they do not come. He repeatedly invites them and they completely fail to take up his invitation. The prophets of old have brought the invitation on many occasions have been ignored so God punishes the people and invites others to the banquet instead. The Chosen People have ignored God's invitation so he invites all the others of the world to share the table with him.

This parable told by Jesus is good news for us. We are those who have received the invitation rejected by the Chosen People. Here in this Mass in this Eucharist we celebrate the great love that God has shown us. We are gathered round the table of the Lord and we feast on the precious gifts he gives us.

We have been privileged in the past two weeks to share each evening with some of the children who have spent the last year preparing for just such a celebration. They together with their parents, family and friends have celebrated the gift of the Holy Eucharist, as the children make their First Holy Communion. We haven't been able to celebrate as is past years, but the smaller gatherings spread over three weeks has given us the opportunity of sharing in an intimate way the gift of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the

Eucharist. Others may, like the guests in the parable, have refused the invitation, We have not. We have been welcomed by the Lord around the table of the Lord joyfully accepting his invitation.

We recognise that this parable is good news for us and so we rejoice, but there is also a warning contained in the story and we should be sure that we understand it. At the very end of the parable is the story of the man without a wedding garment. It sits uncomfortably at the end of parable of the wedding feast. In reality it is probably the end of another parable that Matthew recalled though he only remembered part of it but put it at the end of the Wedding Feast story. It is still worth our reflection. The wedding garment is seen as a symbol of new life in Christ. When we accepted God's invitation we left our old life of sin and began a new life of love and goodness. At our baptism we through our parents were presented with a white garment with the words, "See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian Dignity with your family and friends to help you by word and example keep that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.

Wrapped in the folds of our baptismal garment we witness to the presence and power of God's love for us and of our willingness to accept day by day the invitation to be his daughter or son.