

## **Thursday: 20 B**

Youville Residence

23 August 2018

Dear Father Martin, and dear residents, staff and volunteers here at Youville:

### ***Introduction***

Before saying a few words on today's short Gospel, let me say how happy I am to be here with all of you to celebrate this Holy Mass. I am especially grateful to Father Martin, your chaplain, for regularly celebrating the Eucharist with you. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the staff here at Youville for the wonderful care they provide for you, residents, and for your families. Together with the dedicated volunteers they are a blessing to you – and to the wider community – at this time in your life. Providence Health Care carries out an invaluable ministry in the Lower Mainland. I thank the good Lord for ensuring that the healing and caring mission of Jesus is carried out with such expertise and tenderness in our midst.

### ***Gospel***

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to us about the response given to the invitation from God – who is represented by a king – to participate in a wedding banquet (cf. Mt 22:1-14). Its main purpose, like all the parables, I believe, is to tell us something about God's relationship to us, and of our relationship with him.

Many people were invited, but something surprising happened:

none of the intended guests came to take part in the feast, saying they had other things to do. Some were even indifferent, and some even violent in their response.

But we have to place this at another level. God is good to us. He freely offers us his friendship, his joy, his salvation. There's nothing stingy about God. He goes out of his way to keep on inviting. He wants the banquet hall of heaven to be filled to the rafters!

But so often we do not accept his invitation to draw close to him. gifts. We place our own concerns and interests first. When the Lord is calling to us to deepen our friendship with him or to serve our neighbour more generously, sometimes that seems to annoy us. And we brush off the call of our conscience and of our heart.

Here at Youville, whether you are a resident, member of the staff or volunteer, remember that God is calling you because he is with you. His presence is not just quiet – leaving us be – but he wants more of our hearts and he wants us to give more to his sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters.

I take great consolation, moreover, in the truth that God – despite our slackness – keeps on inviting. Indeed, he not only goes out to the highways and byways to gather lots of people to him; he also comes after me, even if I have neglected or even rejected him before. The Lord never gives up on his people. And he never gives up on me.

God wants the banquet hall to be filled. His goodness knows no bounds and does not discriminate against anyone, not even me when I sin – for he wants to pull me up.

Not only is everyone – and I mean everyone in the world – given the opportunity to respond to the invitation, to his call; he never gives up on me.<sup>1</sup>

One detail I have always found curious, and a little disturbing, in the parable is the fate of the poor guy who didn't have a wedding robe and who was thrown out, rather harshly. Isn't that a little unfair?

One of the great Saints of the Church, Pope Gregory the Great, has an answer that I find compelling. In his commentary on this parable, he remarks that what the wedding garment really symbolizes is the man's charity or love: our charity. The man had faith when he accepted the invitation. But that faith must be lived out in practice. He needed to put on the garment of love, but he didn't. And St Gregory adds: "And this garment is woven symbolically on two looms of wool, one above and one below: love of God and love of neighbour."<sup>2</sup>

That is our call, too: to grow daily in love of God and neighbour – the two – or rather "one – commandment that we must live in practice if

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (12 October 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 10: *PL* 76, 1288.

we are to eternal the wedding banquet of eternal life.

***Conclusion***

Now, as we continue this Eucharist, we are prepared with the nourishment of the Bread of Life to enter into the heavenly banquet, what we call “the Supper of the Lamb” just before we receive Holy Communion.

Once again, my thanks to all of you – and I promise you my prayers.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver