

*Love our Habit, Faith our Habitation... wear it,
walk it, be it.*



The wedding clothes...

In today's gospel a king invites the people to celebrate the wedding banquet of his son.

The wedding banquet of his son... we are all invited to the wedding banquet, as God invites his bride, the Church... to join the heavenly feast. To become part of the family. To celebrate the love God breaks and shares in the world.

But the people in today's story say no, and not only do they say no...they kill the messengers.

In our world, too, the voice of love and hospitality is often rejected. In a world full of powerful voices, and huge corporations; in the smaller stories of our own communities and lives, how often is the voice of love and peace that rejected amongst the violence of war, oppression, greed and fear, or simply in the busy rush of life? Do we see it rejected? Do we reject it ourselves?

I know of a priest, Fr John Gribbon, who worked in Northern Ireland. A tough place to minister, full of broken edges, and sorrows, angers and hurts. In one of his Northern Irish parishes he started peace prayer walks with Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. Someone graffitied his church wall. "peace loving

b*****s” (an adjective of a nature I may get eyebrows raised for repeating in church). One of the wardens in one parish said “I hope you’re going to preach the gospel and not all that *love your enemies ... ~~e**p~~ ... rubbish*”. (It wasn’t the word ‘rubbish’, but, again, I’m saving your blushes). And the story unfolded from there. But Fr. John stood firm. Because... we walk the love, we wear the love. We aren’t just called to read the gospel, we are called to wear it, to walk it, to be it.

We are invited to a banquet by a King,
who calls us all to be people of his Kingdom.

A kingdom of love, and hope, and trust. A kingdom where all are invited. Especially those who are lost in the byways and highways of life, and who would never think the invitation is for them. For those who have the grace to receive it.

But ... like those in the story, so often in our world, in our lives, that invitation is refused. The gospel calls us to reflect where we get caught up in prejudices, fears, busy-ness, or distractions, and we turn down the greatest invitation of all time. Like those in the gospel, we go away – one to the farm, one to the business – to whatever it is that calls our time, forgetting that all we have comes from him.

And perhaps that is what is going on with this dress code in today’s reading.

In Roman times, identity itself was signalled by clothes. A cap shows a freedman, purple shows a senator.

This is scriptural language about identity. About who we are, shown by what we wear.

S. Paul talks about baptism as being clothed with Christ¹, meaning becoming part of his body. Our membership of the party – the family of God – can’t be put on one moment and taken off the next. It is part of us.

... Because the one who wears our human skin with and for us, the bread of life in our every day existence, does actually call us to wear his Love with him, in compassion, in courage and hope.

¹ Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ (NIV).
Romans 13:14 Rather, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus (NIV)

I wonder if you have ever seen a member of a religious community wearing a habit? Did you ever wonder why our religious use that word for their clothing? Because it reminds us that we are called to wear our faith, and to make it part of our very being. To make the 'habits' of love and faith and trust and hope, - whether they're literal clothing, or something of mind and heart - something that goes with us everywhere we go – our habitation. Something by which people can identify us, something that speaks more loudly than any other label we might wear. And something, too, in a strange way, that we have to live up to, and in to. It's a bit like wearing a clerical collar, or even a cross – how does it affect the way we drive, the way we behave in queues, or in the everyday interactions of our lives? It's not just for Sundays. But.... It's not just about physical clothing, it's about the way we wear our faith, and live into it. It's about how we wear our human skin, knowing we share it with our incarnate Lord.

Because this goes even deeper than clothes. Even deeper than our symbols of belonging. It goes into the skin itself. Into our DNA as Christians.

Today's reading gives us the invitation to all to the feast. All. Everyone. It also gives us the call to walk the love we receive. A raises the reality of the choices we make.

When the guest today is found to not be wearing the clothes of Christ – he is thrown out. Jesus reminds us that we need to ensure that he can recognise us by our clothing of love when it comes to the eternal banquet at the end of all time.

But in our God of love all is not ever completely lost. Even then, there is love that follows us, and brings us home. Even be it through the Cross, where we learn to lay down all that has kept us from love in this life.

Because... that is not the end of the story.

That guest – he is seized at a party,

(I know someone who was seized during a celebration of Passover)

– he is bound and silenced. He is condemned before a king

(I know a person who was condemned in silence before a king called Herod),

and he is thrown into the place of darkness and horror.

(We say it every week – he descended to the dead).

If one of my children sends themselves to hell, cuts themselves off from love and grace, and isn't able to come in the garments of mercy to the feast I spread before them, says our Lord... then I will go there too. I will go there, and I will bring them home.

The Lord will find us, even when we cannot work out how to follow, and he will bring us home – but it will mean walking through the darkness of the Cross, redeeming what we lost, re-finding Easter and new life.

So when we get up and decide what to wear in the morning...we have a choice.

We can shut ourselves off from the party into darkness, selfishness and fear... and have to be walked by God through the darkness of Good Friday... or, we can join him now in the light of Easter, and in his mission of love in the world.

How much is our faith our first priority? How much does it dictate our everyday choices of living? How much of a priority do we place on coming to church, and joining him at the feast? On our giving – financial, and of our time? How much do we pick up our bible, or open our hearts in prayer? Where is our faith in our priority list? - because it is not something we can put on and take off... Jesus is saying today to us... to be truly part of the community, we have to commit ourselves. To wear the love, and to walk it.

Let's make love our habit. Faith our habitation. Church – and the banquet of love, our home-land.

S. Paul gets it in our reading today...

“Beloved..... whatever is true ... keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you”