

Invitation Accepted

In the course of our lives we receive hundreds of invitations.

The "invite" may arrive in an embossed envelope with beautiful calligraphy.

Or, it may show up in the inbox of our email. It can even be quietly mentioned in the parking lot after work.

Invitations open the door to graduations, birthdays, anniversaries, dinner-parties and weddings.

To some invitations we jump with joy. Others, we might prefer to ignore. Often, when excluded from the invitation list, feelings are hurt, drama runs high!

Whatever the case, an *invitation* is not a command. I can accept or decline. I can say *yes*, I can say *no*.

This Sunday's gospel is about being *invited*. Jesus tells a story about a King who summons his chosen guests to his son's wedding banquet.

What goes terribly wrong is that the invited guests refuse to come. Some even respond with hostility. What a mess!

Instead of cancelling the party, the king is undeterred. Instead, he comes up with a new guest list and sends out messengers to summon them.

When humans don't respond well, the King intensifies his invitation and continues to assure that the banquet goes on. This king is persistent (Matthew 22:1-14)

We must never forget that Christian faith is rooted in an invitation.

And while we want to share the faith we love and cherish with others, faith *cannot* be forced on another. This is a hard truth, especially when people we love have opted to say "no,"

God does not impose companionship with his Son--the Bridegroom--upon us. He does not coerce us to live as disciples of Jesus.

We remain free to accept or reject, to say "yes" or to say "no." The King is constantly extending invitations. And yet, he never demands that we accept them, whether in this life, or in the next. This is a supremely benevolent king who respects our freedom. He even assents to the eternal destiny we have freely chosen for ourselves.

And, our "yes" to the king's invitation is always a work in progress.

I once knew a marriage therapist who would quip: "You say your vows on the day of your wedding. But every day you wake up and have to figure out how to make those vows work *today*."

The same is true of our faith. At some point we said "yes" to the faith of our baptism. But every day we have to figure

out how to make our faith work today. Our "yes" entails responsibility.

This day is full of invitations.

Pray that we would jump at every opportunity that leads us to become our better selves;

To everything that would extend the love of the king's Son;

To everything that feeds our souls until we reach the horizon of eternity.

Amen.

Fr. Steven Labaire