

ACCOMPANYING OTHERS

28th Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 11 October 2020

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 22:1-14

We cannot sneak into heaven.

We cannot manipulate our way around heaven.

The Gospel today is the parable of the wedding banquet.

It reminds us that all are included,

but some will reject the invitation

and persecute those who offer the invitation from God.

We remember God's many invitations to the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them."

Some think that they can sneak into heaven, as symbolised by the man in today's parable who tried to sneak in.

He hasn't come through the attendants at the front door.

We can't pretend our way into heaven.

The wedding garment in the parable is a symbol of a genuine response to God.

The man without a wedding garment evicted.

Not because he is poor.

But because he has not fulfilled his calling.

When asked how he had managed to get into the Banquet without a wedding garment, he remains silent.

He is not genuine.

"'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 'For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

GENUINE LOVE

Jesus calls us to genuine love.

Pope Francis in his recent encyclical ['Fratelli Tutti'](#) teaches us about genuine love as he gives depth to the parable of the Good Samaritan who accompanies the man severely beaten.

This Sunday we reflect on a particular way of accompanying people in need; namely people in palliative care.

LIFE AND DEATH

We care for the gift of life that God has given us. We support dignity of life and palliative care, and we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, as some are suggesting in Queensland at present. However in society, there are some who think that they know our Catholic beliefs, but don't really know.

There are three resources available from 2019 in Catholic parishes across the Archdiocese this weekend.

If anyone didn't receive a copy last year, there are extra copies available after Mass today and on the hyperlinks at <https://bit.ly/2Seiz9m>.

The three resources are

1. ["For the Common Good – Love is Stronger Than Death"](#)
2. ["Facts you may not know about palliative care"](#)
3. ["The facts you may not know about euthanasia and assisted suicide around the world"](#)

A fourth resource is today's letter from the Queensland Bishops 11th October 2020.

4. ['Dying Peacefully - No Euthanasia Sunday'](#)

This document expands an invitation to accompany people in palliative care.

1ST RESOURCE - 'LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH'

In Archbishop Coleridge's 2019 pastoral letter

["For the Common Good – Love is Stronger Than Death"](#) he says

"For example, the Catholic tradition affirms that:

- *a person can voluntarily stop treatment for a terminal illness that is judged to be overly burdensome or disproportionate.*
- *pain and suffering can be relieved, even if the medication intentionally administered*

for this purpose could have the foreseeable effect of hastening death.

- *a person, together with their families and loved ones, should discuss their wishes in terms of care and their desire for potential life-prolonging interventions should they become incompetent, and can document this in the form of an advanced care plan.*

None of the above constitute so called 'voluntary assisted dying', physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia"

“Euthanasia puts an end not merely to a person’s life, but to the profound meaning and intimacy that can arise from it, even at the very end.”

“Let us not make the mistake of thinking that we are respecting freedom when we provide the means for someone to kill themselves, or of thinking that we are being loving and compassionate when we intentionally and actively hasten a person’s death. We respect freedom when we are sure that our social structures and laws don’t make anyone feel that they or society would be better off if they were dead. We are compassionate when we ensure that our society and its laws leave no one feeling that their life is not worth living or that they are under some subtle obligation to end their lives.”

2ND RESOURCE - “FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE”

For example,

‘the Australian and New Zealand Society for Palliative Medicine and the Australian Medical Association oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide’.

3RD RESOURCE - “THE FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE AROUND THE WORLD”

For example,

‘107 of the World Medical Association’s 109 constituent National Medical Associations oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide’

For example,

footnote 14 on insurance company pressure on a person in California and another in Oregon.

4TH RESOURCE - ‘DYING PEACEFULLY - NO EUTHANASIA SUNDAY’ by the Queensland Bishops 2020

This Year the Queensland Catholic Bishops have written a Pastoral Letter for today. It is available on the link. <https://bit.ly/2Seiz9m>

For example,

‘People need assistance — not to end their lives but at the end of their lives — in ways that they feel fully recognise their autonomy and dignity’

‘We are challenged now to approach death and the dying differently, accompanying every person on the way to death and allowing them to love and to be loved to the very end and into eternity.

Pope Francis has encouraged Catholic people everywhere to resist euthanasia and to ensure that the elderly, the young and the vulnerable are not cast aside in what he has called a “throw-away culture”.

Instead, the Pope calls us as Catholics to follow Jesus Christ by accompanying people at the end of their life with all the skill of palliative medicine and all the compassion of the human heart, since true palliative care embraces the whole person, physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

That is the 'care-first' approach which the Church supports being made available on a statewide basis –

an alternative path to that of assisted dying legislation.

To that end the Church is investigating the development of a training program within Catholic communities to help people better understand what choices they already have and what pathways already exist to ensure a dignified and peaceful death.

The aim is to train facilitators who can guide people to the experts they need and who can provide opportunities for those experts to interact with people in their particular contexts from time to time in a formative way. '

'This is the type of care that Pope Francis envisions the Church being able to offer as an accompaniment to those coming to the end of their life. It should be well within our capacity to offer. If this type of ministry is one that would appeal to you, then there is an Expression of Interest form that you can fill out through the parish. It is not a binding commitment, merely an indication that when more detail is fleshed out on the availability of the short course, most likely provided through Australian Catholic University, you will be contacted again to see if you wish to pursue taking it up.'

WE PRAY ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

We pray about this initiative during Mass today.

A nominated parish member will be outside the front door after Mass with a copy of the invitation to express an interest in training to accompany a person coming to the end of his or her life.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101120.cfm>

