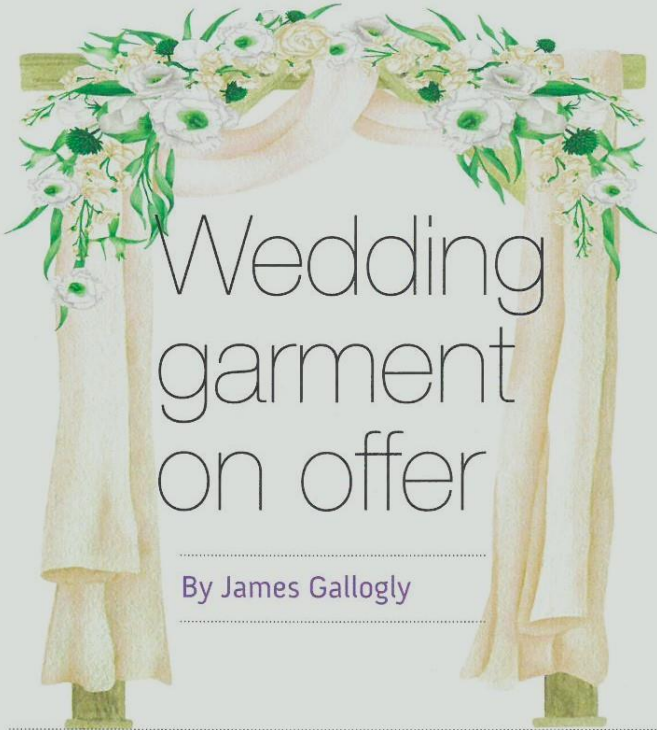


SUNDAY PLUS

A different banquet



Wedding garment on offer

By James Gallogly

The welcome of “bad and good alike” to the wedding feast is a powerfully prophetic moment in scripture. The Church throughout history has always been a mixed body of saints and sinners. How often, though, have the saints been too humble to accept their goodness, the sinners too blind to accept their fate?

It is particularly meaningful for the prison chaplain who looks beyond the sentence and the crime of the person before them. The Chaplaincy offer, like the wedding feast, is simply at the will of a loving God, always there to open the hand of friendship and love no matter how many times it is rejected.

Always on offer is the opportunity of repentance. In prison, life can sometimes resemble a cruel game of Snakes and Ladders. Progress can

appear steady and sure, built upon the very best of intentions. However, old habits die hard, frustrations linger and deeply ingrained patterns of behaviour can be a constant challenge to overcome. Down the snake you go!

At such a point, “I told you so” or “You’ll never change” or “That’s typical of you” are words that rub salt into the wound. The system can be harsh and unrelenting. What is required instead is a time for reflection, a time for listening and a time for cries to be heard.

Chaplaincy can be a refuge for souls made welcome nowhere else: a place where Jesus is waiting, wedding garment in hand, ready to wipe away the tears from every cheek.

James Gallogly is a lay Catholic chaplain in a UK prison.

Voice for the voiceless

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

What did the king’s son and his bride think when their wedding feast was populated, not with their expected guests, but with a motley crowd brought in from the highways and byways? How many of them came for the free meal rather than from love of the bridal couple?

What about the slaves? Did they eat – or did they serve the food and stand hungrily aside, watching others devour it? Were they helpless

bystanders, witnesses to good fortune which they couldn’t share? Did anybody think about the slaves?

We don’t intend to hurt others, but thoughtlessness can be a very effective weapon. It’s easy to forget that someone’s valid opinions or preferences remain unheard, simply because we’ve not allowed an opportunity for speech.

The slaves were voiceless at the wedding feast. Could they have been given a voice? Who could have spoken out for them?

What does it cost to become a voice for the voiceless?

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Jesus teaches us to place the needs of the poor before our own. Our needs, even if legitimate, are not as urgent as those of the poor, who lack the basic necessities of life.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Monday 16 October

St Gerard Majella
(1726-1755)

When Gerard Majella was 23 years old, his mother, afraid of losing her son, locked him in his room on the last day of a Redemptorist-led parish mission to prevent him from joining the Redemptorists. Gerard simply climbed out of the window. He left a note saying, “I am off to become a saint.”

At first, it didn’t look promising. His first Superior described him as “a useless lay-brother”. After profession, things changed. A willing volunteer to help in any difficult or uncomfortable situation, a sign on Gerard’s door read: “Here the will of God is done” - and he meant it. Eventually, his fellow Redemptorists nicknamed him “Let me do it”.

Gerard excelled in settling family disputes and in giving spiritual direction, both directly and through his letters. Eager to pray with mothers experiencing difficult pregnancies and childbirth, he is known as the patron saint of mothers and young children.

After six years as a Redemptorist, Gerard died of TB on 16 October 1755.

Today:
Isaiah 25:6-10
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14

Monday:
Romans 1:1-7
Luke 11:29-32

Tuesday:
Romans 1:16-25
Luke 11:37-41

Wednesday:
2 Timothy 4:10-17
Luke 10:1-9

Thursday:
Romans 3:21-30
Luke 11:47-54

Friday:
Romans 4:1-8
Luke 12:1-7

Saturday:
Romans 4:13, 16-18
Luke 12:8-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 45:1, 4-6
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Matthew 22:15-21