**Reflection for Sunday 15 October**

**28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

Today’s readings offer us more insight and wisdom of the call to synodality, which is currently being discerned at the Universal Synod in Rome.

In writing to the early church in Philippi, Paul reminds them, not only of his own situation, but of his call to ‘servant leadership’. This service is modelled on that of Jesus himself, who came not to be served but to serve. In this way, Paul not only talks about the grace of God in Christ but illustrates the grace by his freely given, loving service. This grace allows him to take courage and strength that, with God, anything is possible and achievable.

All around we see this extraordinary grace and generosity: from Paul to the Philippians, from the Philippians to Paul and, to all, from God, the most lavish giver of all. We see the Holy Spirit here animating all the relationships. The working document which is guiding the current Synod gathering in Rome, describes ‘*a synodal Church [as] open, welcoming and embraces all’.* So it would be wonderful to see such a spirit animate the assemblies in Rome — a spirit of generosity and grace, freedom and love.

Paul’s ‘servant’ style of leadership encourages the members of that early church community to give freely and generously. This Christian way of living is often counter-cultural. The Synod Working Document also says ‘*The radical call is, therefore, to build together, synodally, an attractive and grounded Church: an outgoing Church, in which all feel welcome’.*

We hear this invitation echoed in the parable Jesus tells of the wedding feast (taking up the imagery from Isaiah). Those who are initially invited refuse to come. Many find excuses while some have a more violent reaction, making their response very clear. However, the King is not put off by this. The invitation is taken out, to the crossroads, to all – and receives a better response. As a synodal Church, walking together is an inclusive action. We are called to examine our own response to this call of synodality and to journey to the crossroads to call and invite. Yet our response has to be one of active participation – we have to be ready like those who attended ‘dressed in a wedding garment’.

It can be very easy to find a variety of excuses not to do this but, like Paul, we can trust that ‘there is nothing we cannot master with the help of the One who gives us strength.’