

28A

Most of us have seen the painting of Christ knocking on the door of a house, with the words: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock'. When the artist had finished the painting, he took his little son into the studio. 'Son', he said, 'your daddy has just painted this picture - do you like it?' The little fellow examined it seriously for a few moments. Oh yes.' The boy spoke up, it's nice. But you've made a mistake, Daddy - you forgot to put a latch on the door so Jesus can open it.' His father smiled and said. 'No son, your daddy didn't make a mistake. There is a latch on the door alright but it's on the inside. Jesus invites us to follow him but leaves the decision to us.

The people invited to the wedding feast turned down the invitation. You remember the rich young man in the gospel. Jesus invited him to leave his cushy life-style behind and follow Him but he turned down the offer and walked away a rather sad man. However, Jesus didn't run after him and give him a dressing down. Even though God doesn't coerce us to follow him there is always a basic sadness in turning down His invitation.

Our response to follow Jesus, however, must not be half-hearted or complacent. If so, we would be taking Heaven for granted. Being a catholic Christian could turn out to be no more than a mere label we use rather than having any real depth of faith. The man minus his wedding garment would fit into this category.

Some Scripture scholars tell us that the wedding garment refers to ongoing repentance in our lives. Each day we're called to be more like the living Christ and model our lives on his. We're not serious Christians when we play down the radical nature of God's call and end up being little or no different from professed non-believers. Being a baptised catholic, for instance, doesn't give us an automatic passport into heaven. A baptismal

certificate may be one's entry ticket into the catholic school but it's no guarantee of entry into Eternal Life. I know the word 'radical' has negative connotations these days but you can be a radical follower of Jesus in a very quiet unassuming way. Conversely you can be a mediocre follower of Jesus in a rather loud vocal sort of way.

Someone remarked to me recently that hoards of people go to Holy Communion, and I'm not to judge, but the number of people going to confession leaves a lot to be desired. Bearing this in mind how many of us would Jesus find, on inspection, not wearing our wedding garment of ongoing repentance? How many of us would even play down our sins.

The Gospel calls for a whole-hearted response with no hint of complacency. In this way, proudly wearing our wedding garment of ongoing renewal, we can look forward to the heavenly banquet.