

October 11, 2020  
28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 25:6-10a (p. 216)  
Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6  
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20  
Matthew 22:1-14

Today we are celebrating the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time. We have six more weeks left in this Liturgical Year, and then on Sunday November 29<sup>th</sup> we will begin the Season of Advent in preparation for the Nativity of our Lord.

Reflecting back on this year, I think it has gone by rather quickly. Mid September marked our tenth full year here at this facility and in the last year we've experienced a gamut of events and emotions. From happy to sad, from amazement to disappointment, through it all we've learned to trust God even more.

Here I think it is good to remember that when we chose to follow the Lord, it was for richer for poorer, for better for worse, in sickness and in health, no matter what may come, or what we have done, we are never separated from the love of God.

Nevertheless, we live in uncertain times; bad news bombards us daily, yet for the Christian who loves the Lord and endeavors to keep His commandments - God remains a strong high tower of hope in the midst of uncertain storms. The OT prophet Isaiah records,

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations. He will destroy death forever.

The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken.

So even though when all around us the circumstance seem to look bleak and dismal, it is only a temporary situation and we can be assured that God is near when we call upon Him.

Isaiah 66:1 records, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me, and where *is* the place of my rest?” This passage of Scripture is very interesting to say the least. Think about it, the heavens are God’s throne and the earth is His footstool; so then we have to ask ourselves, - why focus our eyes on His footstool when we could be gazing upon His throne?

The Scripture readings today bear testimony that there is no problem too big or too little for God. The truth of the matter is, “Nothing is impossible for God.” Isaiah reminds us, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

The psalmist David assurance us, “Even though you or I walk in the dark valley [of death], we [need not] fear no evil; for you God are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.”

Others may chide, give up on your dreams, it won’t work, you are not going to make it, you are going to get sick, or whatever, and the list goes on and on, etc. etc. Whether it’s a negative message about health, finances, security, or you name it - there is always someone, some official, or some organization that will try to

convince you that they know better than God or that you can't trust Him.

Unfortunately the enemy of our souls will use just about anyone and anything to keep us from trusting God. Their pitch is to focus on the circumstance rather than listen to God, indeed the blind trying to lead the blind.

So where do we turn for help? We turn to the Lord and to his Word; and on that note lets turn our attention to today's Gospel reading.

Now, we've already read the parable Jesus addressed to the chief priests and the elders of the people. I would guess many of us are somewhat familiar with this story in the context of the overall redemption history. However, notice here again that Jesus spent a lot of time addressing religious leaders. Sadly, when God reached out to the nation of Israel they refused, so He turned His attention to the Gentile nations.

But there really is more to this parable than meets the casual read and ones first conclusions, especially when considering the last scary point "many are called but few are chosen."

For all its interesting twists and turns - the essence of this gospel parable ultimately boils down to one final exhortation, an exhortation intended for those who profess to have faith in the Father and His Son - and that challenge is: demonstrate your faith with acts of righteous charity or love.

So lets take another look at today's Gospel reading. The king, who represents God the Father, summoned His guests via Moses and

then the prophets to a wedding feast for His son Jesus. And who are these first invited guests, - the nation of Israel? Two times they refused so he sent His servants to invite anyone who would come; hence the Church was born and the wedding hall was filled.

However there is more to the story here because we notice that there was one person present at the banquet who for some reason or another chose not to comply with the dress code. Indeed, we might note that even though the invitation and the provisions relating to the banquet were presented as a free gift, there still were responsibilities associated with that gift.

So then, how are we to understand the significance of the one person who did not have a wedding garment on? Who was he and why would he choose to not properly dress for the event?

Once again we will return to the gospel for more insight. To begin with, in ancient days when there was a royal wedding of splendor all the guests were given a special wedding garment to wear. In essence there really was no excuse for the man not to wear his special robes, hence the reason the Scriptures report that he was speechless. Thus to reject the wedding garment was in essence to reject the King's generosity and position.

You or I may have met a person or two who in essence think they are above God's rules and/or scrutiny. They think they know better than God, or they believe they have special privileges that set them apart from the rest of the group? Needless to say Scripture warns to be wary of such people whose goal is to lead others away from God. They are to be considered wolves in sheep's clothing.

The good news is that there are not very many of these folks in the Church at large, but we still need to be cautious. Needless to say, God will eventually single them out as such, and as time passes they become more apparent because their lack of a wedding garment begins to show.

At this point some may ask, so what is so important about the wedding garment? Well in many ways the wedding garment is the key to understanding the whole parable this morning and so let's see what the Bible has to say concerning this special garment gift.

In one of the oldest books in the Bible, Job writes in the book bearing his name, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me or clothed itself with me; my justice was like a robe and a turban or a diadem or a crown" (Job 29:14 AMP)!

The Psalmist declares, "Let your priests be clothed with righteousness (right living and right standing with God); and let your saints shout for joy" (Psalm 132:9 AMP).

Again the OT prophet Isaiah proclaims, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:9-11).

Subsequently the ancient church Fathers believed that the wedding garment mentioned in this parable represented the baptismal garment. And so here we are assured that the invitation to enter the Kingdom of God and join together in the wedding feast of the King's Son Jesus is offered to whosoever will-may come.

Thus all are welcome, but just because something is offered as a free gift, as was the wedding garment, the reception of a gift given to us is not without consequence. For example, if someone offers you the free gift of a puppy dog, and you accept that gift, that gift is not without its consequences - you are now responsible to care for that animal. You now have an obligation to feed it, take it to the vet, spend time with it, and make sure it is cared for properly.

The same is true when we receive gifts from God – for example the Sacraments. When one accepts God’s gift of salvation as initiated in the Sacrament of Baptism they are now responsible by extension of that gift to live a life of faith, repentance, love, and good works that bring glory to God and not us.

I’m hoping here that these illustrations concerning personal responsibility make sense, because I know that many people have been taught and believe that because salvation is a free gift given to us by God and not of our good works then they are now free of any action or responsibility for having believed in and having received the merits of Jesus Christ.

In reality the notion of non-compliance to God’s Commandments is far from the truth. On the contrary, “to whom much has been given much is required.”

Thus one of the goals for this morning’s homily - is to illustrate the importance of the Body of Christ, and the sheer wisdom involved with staying connected with and supported by a solid biblical and historical community of faith.

Sometimes we forget that people need to feel affirmed and safe. We can get so hung up on our doctrinal differences, our facilities,

our programs, or whatever else catches our fancy that we forget that God invited everyone to come and join with Him in celebrating in the wedding feast of His Son.

What makes *our* wedding feast so special is that Jesus offers everyone whom He has gathered the privilege to participate in the Sacrificial Heavenly Food of Immortality. More than a memorial, more than a symbol, more than a sign, He said this is my Body and this is My Blood. So holy is this event that when we participate in this Most Sacred Mystery a miracle takes place- we literally become One with the Divine Other in Holy Communion, in essence we become the Church.

Think about it - and we have mentioned it already many times before, I know of no other place on earth, no other religion, no other philosophy, or no other organization anywhere here on God's wonderful footstool that we can participate in such a miracle that happens every Sunday right here at Mass during the Eucharistic Ritual Feast.

Thankfully, Our Lord God invites everyone to come to the feast; yet so many are too busy doing other activities. Hungry, naked, lonely, many imprisoned, the feast is ready but either they do not know about it or they have been told not to come. Our Great Commission is to go out and invite them to come – come taste and see that the Lord is good.

In closing I would like to read from St Paul's letter to the Philippians, which consists of a most worthy spiritual formation goal to strive for. St Paul wrote,

I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me.

After thanking the Philippian church for ministering to his needs the blessed Apostle continued by sharing a wonderful promise with them concerning God's faithfulness. By this time in his life he was convinced that no matter what he might face in life, God had always been there for him. And so with great confidence he inserted the final capstone to his message:

My God, my God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father belongs glory forever and ever. Amen – so be it.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.