

Scripture Study

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 25:6-10a

(Ps 23:1-6)

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14

Overview of the Gospel:

- As in the last several Sunday's readings, Jesus' condemnation of the Jewish leaders continues. It is the Wednesday before Good Friday—even as he is condemning them, Jesus continues to offer them Divine Mercy: a last chance for them to see themselves in his parables, and to accept him and his message.
- Jesus switches from the image of the vineyard that we have been hearing the last three weeks, to that of the wedding feast. In the Old Testament, the wedding feast was used as an image of the Messianic kingdom to come (see Isaiah 25:6-10, our first reading).
- In biblical society, this feast was of high social importance. To make light of an invitation was considered the height of rudeness—even an occasion of violent retribution. While the king's invitation was urgent (verse 4); the response was very much not so (verses 5-6). Thus, when the invited were not worthy (verse 8), then the unworthy were invited (verses 9-10).
- Jesus' parable highlights God's impartial treatment of all who are called—Jews and Gentiles alike. He rewards and punishes on the basis of one's acceptance or rejection of his call (Romans 2:6-11).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, God makes at least 6 promises to his people. What are they? How do they (or could they) apply to you?
- In the 2nd Reading, how has St. Paul learned to rely on God for his every need? How do we know that God will also provide for us (verses 19-20)?
- Why is the banquet in Jesus' parable being held?
- What do you learn about those originally invited? What is so surprising about their response?
- Who did the king eventually invite? Why?
- What is the problem with the one guest (verses 11-12)? What does it mean to be in the king's presence "without a wedding garment"? What is its significance (Revelation 21:27; 6:9-11; 7:9-10, 13-14)? Why is this ill-clad guest banished?
- What does it mean to accept Jesus' invitation? What is he inviting you to?
- What kind of excuses have you given for not responding to Jesus' invitation? What kind of change are you afraid he wants of you?
- With whom do you identify with in this story and why?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 546, 796

Closing prayer

Who can assure us that we will be alive tomorrow? Let us listen to the voice of our conscience, to the voice of the royal prophet: "Today, if you hear God's voice, harden not your heart." Let us not put off from one moment to another what we should do because the next moment is not yet ours.

—St. Padre Pio

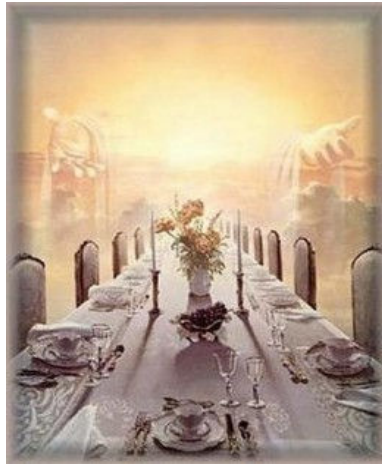
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"Everything is Ready, Come to the Banquet"

Scripture: *Matthew 22:1-14*

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Meditation: What can a royal wedding party tell us about



God's kingdom? One of the most beautiful images used in the scriptures to depict what heaven is like is the wedding celebration and royal feast given by the King for his newly wed son and bride. Whatever grand feast we can imagine on earth, heaven is the feast of all feasts because the Lord of heaven and earth invites us to the most important banquet of all – not simply as bystanders or guests – but as members of Christ's own body, his bride the church! The last book in the bible ends with an invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb – the Lord Jesus who offered his life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and who now reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come!* (Revelation 22:17). The Lord Jesus invites us to be united with himself in his heavenly kingdom of peace and righteousness.

Why does Jesus' parable of the marriage feast seem to focus on an angry king who ends up punishing those who refused his invitation and who mistreated his servants? Jesus' parable contains two stories. The first has to do with the original guests invited to the marriage feast. The king had

sent out invitations well in advance to his subjects, so they would have plenty of time to prepare for coming to the feast. How insulting for the invited guests to then refuse when the time for celebrating came! They made light of the King's request because they put their own interests above his. They not only insulted the King but the heir to the throne as well. The king's anger is justified because they openly refused to give the king the honor he was due. Jesus directed this warning to the Jews of his day, both to convey how much God wanted them to share in the joy of his kingdom, but also to give a warning about the consequences of refusing his Son, their Messiah and Savior.

The second part of the story focuses on those who had no claim on the king and who would never have considered getting such an invitation. The "good and the bad" along the highways certainly referred to the Gentiles and to sinners. This is certainly an invitation of grace – undeserved, unmerited favor and kindness! But this invitation also contains a warning for those who refuse it or who approach the wedding feast unworthily. Grace is a free gift, but it is also an awesome responsibility. God invites each of us to his banquet that we may share in his joy. Are you ready to feast at the Lord's banquet table?

"Lord Jesus, may I always know the joy of living in your presence and grow in the hope of seeing you face to face in your everlasting kingdom."

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