

Homily of Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2023

Isaiah 25:6-10; Psalm 23:1-6; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22:1-14

The first reading is Isaiah's prophecy of the mission of Jesus Christ. Every word in the first reading is fulfilled in Jesus: "A feast of rich food and choice wines... The veil that veils all peoples, he will destroy, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. He will wipe away the tears from every face; the reproach of his people he will remove... Behold, our God to whom we looked to save us!" (Isaiah 25:7-9). Jesus provided all these when he came. He is still providing them in our time. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The gospel is the parable of the wedding feast. The Jews who refused to accept Jesus were those who either had excuses or ignored the wedding invitation and who mistreated and killed the messengers of the king. Those who were gathered from the streets to fill the hall were the Jews and the non-Jews who accepted the message of salvation and became followers of Jesus.

Why, then, was someone who was called from the street be punished for not having dressed in a wedding garment? In the ancient Middle East marriage feasts, special wedding garments were provided by the host, so that everyone dressed well. To refuse to wear the wedding garment, provided free of charge by the host, and decided to remain in shabby clothing, was an act of disobedience and a dishonor to the host and the celebration.

For Catholics, the Holy Eucharist is our earthly wedding banquet, which is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. The parable reminds us that the heavenly banquet awaits us after our earthly journey. Our wedding garment here on earth is life in Christ, which we must put on. St. Paul writes in Romans 13:14, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh." In 2 Corinthians 5:17, he writes, "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." We must, therefore, discard the shabby clothes of sin (desires of the flesh) and put on Christ.

This means that salvation is freely offered but heaven is merited. Therefore, while on this earthly journey, as St. Paul invites us to, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). St. Paul describes what awaits us in heaven: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived; the things that God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In the parable, "Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them" (Matthew 22:5-6). Nowadays, ignoring the Mass while doing nothing or preoccupied with other businesses has become common for many Catholics. The persecution of God's ministers has also become widespread.

Someone asked recently whether it is still a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass, considering how a lot of Catholics go to Mass nowadays, only when it is convenient for them or when there are activities and not as obligatory spiritual exercise. The fourth Commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath (the Lord's Day), keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin" (CCC 2181). The Commandment and the teaching of the Catholic Church have not changed!

TV, Facebook, and You Tube Masses are only for the sick, the homebound, and those unable to go to Mass out of necessity; not for those who intentionally miss Mass. Someone says, "Put God first, and everything will fall into place."

St. Paul tells us in the second reading, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Let us seek God first, for he is our strength. We are assured in the first reading, "The veil that veils all peoples, he will destroy, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. He will wipe away the tears from every face; the reproach of his people he will remove... Behold, our God to whom we looked to save us!" (Isaiah 25:7-9).
Amen.

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