

Homily of 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A

The second reading, taken from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians is very encouraging. We, in St. Francis of Assisi Parish, can confidently repeat with St. Paul that we know how to live in humble circumstances and we know also how to live in abundance. We can do all things in him who strengthens us. Many families lived and enjoyed what they had until Hurricane Harvey struck. These families are now living in humble circumstances, sharing with friends and families the little that is available. In St. Francis of Assisi Parish, we worked hard and spent much time and money to make the church, hall and school worthy places for worship, learning and comfort, only to be removed from the church, parish office, hall and school by the destructive powers of Hurricane Harvey. However, like St. Paul we are, now, living in humble circumstances. Our students and teachers are, temporarily, transferred to Resurrection Catholic School. We have 8.00 AM outdoor Mass and 1.00 PM Mass at Our Mother of Mercy Church on Sundays. We use our meeting room for our weekday Mass, Adoration and other spiritual activities. We are at the moment getting the church garage ready so that we can restore our normal Mass times. 8.00 AM outdoor Mass in winter is unrealistic. As St. Paul says, we have learnt the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. In all these, to God be the glory. Amen.

St. Paul thanked the Philippians who shared in his distress. In the same way, we are very grateful to the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, churches, organizations and individuals who have shared and are sharing in our distress. We have received tremendous outpouring of love and support from across the United States. The love and support encourage and urge us on. We are strengthened by the prayers of friends and loved ones who are praying for us. God has used friends and benefactors to fulfill his words in today's second reading, "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." May God bless and reward all our friends and benefactors. Amen.

In the first reading Isaiah prays, "On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines... The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face... On that day it will be said: 'Behold our God to whom we looked to save us! This is the Lord for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us.'" Isaiah was prophesying about Jesus who was to come to save the world and institute the Eucharist, the spiritual wedding banquet. As we have read, Isaiah carefully outlines, in his prophecy, the graces and blessings we receive from Eucharistic celebrations.

The parable of the wedding banquet was, first, for the chief priests and the elders of the people who rejected Jesus and, therefore refused the invitation to the spiritual wedding banquet. But today, the parable is for us who have accepted the invitation to be Catholics, Christians, and to participate in Eucharistic celebrations.

Towards the end of the parable whereby the king punished a man who was not dressed in a wedding garment sounds wired and confusing. An interpretation of the scene is that although we have all accepted to be Christians and Catholics, and attend and participate in Eucharistic celebrations, we are encouraged to wear the wedding garment, which is the Sacrament of Reconciliation, before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. Many Catholics, nowadays, accept six sacraments instead of the seven Sacraments. The Catholics who accept only six sacraments are those who no longer partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is even more confusing that these same Catholics are ready to visit counselors and therapists and pay expensive fees. They are willing to reveal themselves to counselors and therapists, but are unwilling to avail themselves of the healing graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is important to bring to our attention St. Paul's warning to the Corinthians and to us, "So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27).

St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). I pray that this homily encourages, corrects and rebukes us. Amen.

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