

Homily of Twenty-Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

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!" Jesus provided all these when he came. He is still providing them in our time. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and 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. Those who were gathered from the streets to fill the hall were the Gentiles. 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 the wedding garment provided, freely, by the host and decided to remain in shabby clothing was an act of disobedience, and a dishonor to the host and the celebration.

The parable can be applied to various areas of spiritual and earthly journeys. The parable reminds us that heavenly banquet awaits us after our earthly journey. The wedding garment is life in Christ which we must put on in order to enter into eternal life. 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, St. Paul 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.

For us Catholics, the Holy Eucharist is our earthly wedding banquet which is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. An important wedding garment to receiving the Holy Eucharist worthily is being in a state of grace. As sinners, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the most effective channel of being the state of grace. St. Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 11:27, "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).

The guest's refusal to wear the wedding garment and his resultant harsh punishment remind us of the deadly consequences of the sin of disobedience. The sin of disobedience made Adam and Eve to lose the paradise of Eden. Sin of disobedience made Lucifer to lose his angelic position in heaven. Sin of disobedience made King Saul to lose his kingship and his kingdom, and so on. Many people have lost their lives in all kinds of accidents due to refusal to obey rules. Many people have lost their vocations, jobs, marriages, positions, benefits, associations, talents, and so on, due to disobedience. Many people have health issues due to disobedience to health and medical rules. We hear it often said, "Keep to rules, and rules will keep you." This maxim extends to both spiritual and temporal lives.

Virtues of humility and obedience help us to have a better understanding of the second reading. Humility and obedience help us to survive in all circumstances: whether "being well fed or going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need." In humility and obedience, we are strengthened by God, who helps us to do all things. In humility and obedience, we trust God who fully supplies whatever we need, "in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Amen.

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