

28th Sunday of the Year A

*If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear. You are there. (Ps 22:4)*



First Reading

Isaiah 25:6-10

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines, of food rich and juicy, of fine strained wines. On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations, he will destroy Death for ever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek; he will take away his people's shame every where on earth, for the Lord has said so. That day, it will be said: See, this is our God in whom we hoped for salvation; the Lord is the one in whom we hoped. We exult and we rejoice that he has saved us; for the hand of the Lord rests on this mountain.

Second Reading

Philippians 4:12-14.19-20

I know how to be poor and I know how to be rich too. I have been through my initiation and now I am ready for anything anywhere: full stomach or empty stomach, poverty or plenty. There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength. All the same, it was good of you to share with me in my hardships. In return my God will fulfil all your needs, in Christ Jesus, as lavishly as only God can. Glory to God, our Father, for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. 'Tell those who have been invited,' he said, 'that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding.' But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding.' So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Meditation

"Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Hebert request the honour of your presence at the marriage of their daughter Marie to Daniel Berne. A reception will follow."

This contemporary invitation is nothing like the one reported by Matthew. The king must send out twice for the guests to come to his son's wedding. The people respond to the royal invitation with indifference or overt hostility. Festivity suddenly gives way to punishment. New guests are gathered at random from the byroads to fill the banquet hall.

This strange narrative discloses deeper meaning. The parable sketches in bold strokes the feast of joy and communion to which Israel was first invited. Israel refused to accept the invitation of the prophets and the just ones, even this last invitation offered by Jesus and his apostles. Their city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans. The first Christian community took this as the definitive sign that the invitation should be extended to all humanity.

But if "the invited are many, the elect are few." We can be Christian in name, and yet avoid conversion. We can believe that we are invited to the feast of the kingdom, and yet remain indifferent to the empty plates set before so many of the world's children. It is the baptismal life which counts, not the baptismal certificate. That life is the clothing of which Paul speaks. "You must put on that new man created in God's image whose justice and holiness are born of truth" (Ep 4:24). Without that wedding garment, the wedding invitation counts for nothing in the eyes of the king.

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Gospel

Matthew 22:1-14

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have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding.' But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding.' So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, 'How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?' And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

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