

“Go therefore into the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.” (Matthew 22:9) 28th Sunday October 11th, 2020.

Brothers and sisters, usually when we organize a party, we think of all the nice people we want to invite, sometimes those who will acknowledge by also inviting us to their parties. We invite those who we think can dignify the ceremony and sometimes we write on the invitation cards, “please come by invitation only.” On this 28th Sunday we are still reflecting on the Father’s love and mercy. I have therefore chosen v.9 of today’s gospel as the theme, “Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.” Contrary to what we usually do, God shows love and mercy by extending invitation into his wedding banquet to all people both good and bad.

The readings for today tell us that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wedding banquet to which the loving father is inviting all of us to attend. There are three different kinds of banquet presented to us in today’s readings. The first is described by Isaiah which is the banquet on the top of the mountain which is Jerusalem. The second is from the psalmist in psalm 23, which is banquet in a pasture, an oasis of quiet and peace within the dark valley of life’s difficulties and pain. The psalmist says, “Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.” And the third is from the gospel, the wedding banquet of heaven with lavish food initially by invitation but now extended to all people.

Isaiah in our 1st reading promises the people who found themselves in political confusion that the Lord will prepare a banquet for them on the mountain of Jerusalem. “On this mountain, the Lord of host will make for all people a feast of

rich food and wine.... Then the Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces. On that day it will be said, 'Behold our God to whom we looked to save us.'" This promise is fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In today's parable, Jesus shows his Father as the King who prepares a wedding banquet for his son. This banquet is the symbol of the happiness and joy present in Heaven.

The first group of servants who were sent by the King to call those invited to the banquet are the prophets. The 2nd group are the Christian missionaries to the Jews. Since Israel rejected these groups of servants, we are told the king became angry and sent troops to destroy those murderers and burnt their city. This is probably about Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem for rejecting the prophets and Jesus himself which took place in 70 AD. So, who is worthy to attend the final heavenly banquet? "Go therefore into the main street and invite everyone you find." The Gentiles and all of us are now invited to also participate in the Father's love and mercy. We are all invited personally to come to the Lord's feast, and it is up to us whether to accept this invitation or not.

Unfortunately, some of us refuse to respond to this invitation. Others are too busy with work and do not come at all. One important image of God's banquet on earth is the Eucharist. It is God's gift to us, and no one is excluded. We are told that a man came in not wearing the wedding garment. When the scripture mentions garment, it usually symbolises righteousness as Isaiah 61:10 says, "the Lord has clothed me with a garment of righteousness." The fact that we are all invited does not mean we come in not with the appropriate dress. We must prepare ourselves by clothing ourselves with righteous lives. Sometimes it is not easy to

clothe ourselves with righteous life, that is why Paul in the 2nd reading says, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”(Phil 4:13) Perhaps this week we need to reflect how can I live my life in a manner worthy of the invitation I have received to this great feast of love of the Father. **Amen. By Fr. Emmanuel Subaar**