

## 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Isaiah 25:6-10](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#)

[Reading II: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101523.cfm>



Most people in the ancient world had one or two meals a day and these were very basic. If a rich person, as in the gospel passage, held a wedding feast, the invited guests, limited in number, would be able to share a great banquet while the rest of the community would only be able to look on from a distance or catch a whiff in the breeze. Isaiah announces a fabulous feast where not only you, but everyone can participate. This opportunity would be beyond most people's imagination. This banquet is a sign of God's reign on earth!

Isaiah is mostly likely writing as the city of Jerusalem is under siege and rations are limited. King Ahaz is looking for the right political alliance to save him from defeat. Isaiah challenges him to look to God to be the savior. In God's victory, there will be deliverance not only from the armies surrounding the city but food in abundance, the end of suffering, and even death will be destroyed. Everyone can look forward to that work of God!

Isaiah is also teaching about who God is. The God of Israel provides for all people, wipes tears from their faces, and will destroy the veil of death forever. God will bring peace and abundance to all who trust God. He presents the salvation that God offers as a bountiful banquet. This image is also found in other biblical passages, in the meals that Jesus shares with others, and in the Last Supper as Jesus declares the reign of God to be coming.

The gospel parable draws on the same imagery. The original form is probably closer to the passage presented in Luke 14: 15-24. In this earlier form, Jesus is dining at the house of a Pharisee. He tells a parable about how the invited guests did not come so the man had his servants go out and bring people to the banquet. There is no abuse or murder of the servants, nor is there a destruction of the city. Additionally, there is no one cast out of the banquet. Matthew has changed the location of the parable in the flow of the gospel and the audience is now the chief priests in days before Jesus' crucifixion. The leaders of the Jewish community had rejected the prophets and refused to accept their message. They are now rejecting Jesus and his pathway to the kingdom. He is inviting them to the heavenly banquet even though they are in the process of plotting his death. Jesus' offer will now go to others. Matthew then concludes the parable with a fast forward to the end of the world when the king comes and makes a judgement concerning who belongs at the heavenly banquet.

Matthew is addressing his community of early Christians who are being oppressed, rejected, deprived of livelihood, and even food as they have been excluded from the synagogue and rejected in their local community. An early prayer asked that those who turned from the Torah (Law) be condemned to hell. The early Christians then turned to the gentiles to offer the gospel message, and the gentiles responded.

In middle eastern culture, not accepting an invitation to a wedding is a huge insult to the host. It is like saying, I do not want anything to do with you. Leave me alone. People would sometimes decline an invitation if they thought too many people below their dignity would be in attendance. They would be saying that you are degrading me by asking me to eat with

those unimportant people. So, Jesus, inviting everyone from the roads, the marketplace, and the fields, is affirming the dignity of every person.

One additional cultural item is important to understand. When someone held a large banquet, the host would provide clothing for all the participants. Robes and dresses would be available for everyone. The undressed participant did not want to be part of that gathering of people.

The fourth and final selection from the Letter to the Philippians is read today. It is a short thank you for the support that had been given to Paul in his imprisonment. Paul affirms to them that he is confident that God will always provide for him and them.

We are challenged to place our trust in God for all that life holds. While we can take reasonable steps in having a savings account and practicing good hygiene, our faith is not in these. Worrying and anxiety are not going to save us. They are a waste of energy. Our faith is in God, who is always with us. We have entered a covenant through Baptism and God has declared that we are beloved daughters and sons. God will never forget us nor abandon us. A covenant is a permanent commitment. God is permanently in a relationship with us. All three readings reveal a God who wants to save us and give us life. Our challenge is to accept it.

**Themes:**

Images of Heaven  
Final Judgement

Covenant  
Living with abundance or scarcity

**Reflection Questions:**

How do you connect with the idea that everyone is invited to God's banquet?

How have you felt when you have been invited to a gathering that may include people with whom you are uncomfortable?

How do you address the images of an angry, punishing God in your spiritual life?

How are you tempted to put your trust in people, possessions, ideas, or institutions?

What does being a child of God mean to you?

**Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that we may hear God's invitation to life and enter wholeheartedly into the banquet that God has prepared for us

For the grace of openness: that we offer hospitality to all who come to our communities and show God's love and compassion to them

For confidence: that whether we live in abundance or need, we may be aware that God loves us and is always with us

For fruitfulness of our faith: that our lives may manifest a wedding garment made of deeds of justice and acts of charity that proclaim the goodness of God to all

For fuller participation in the Eucharistic Liturgy: that we may draw strength for our daily lives from our communion with Christ and one another in our celebration each week