

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Chapters 25 – 27 of Isaiah contain certain elements of worldwide judgment, cosmic upheaval, God’s defeat of dark powers and deliverance from them, and the enthronement of God in the Temple on the holy mountain in Jerusalem. The image of a banquet, which God hosts on this mountain, conveys the abundance and joy that the rescued faithful will experience once God has defeated the dark forces. The most powerful of these, death itself, will also fall, leaving nothing to mar the joy of God’s reign over “all nations” as the devastated world is renewed. Those who have been brought to God’s mountain will be safe from all harm – protected by God’s hand.

Paul has apparently received some money from the Philippians, prompting him to comment on the change of his apostleship, which has its material as well as spiritual high and low points. At times he has been comfortable, and at other times his circumstances have been more “humble.” From this he has learned how to “go with the flow,” accepting whatever comes along. As always, the strength to persevere comes from Jesus, who supplies everything Paul could possibly need. This confidence in the providential care of God allows Paul to be open to whatever comes.

Which one of us has ever planned a wedding, a graduation party, a summer gathering? We made phone calls for the more informal gatherings. We sent out nicely printed invitations with RSVP cards for the more formal. How many of us have ever wondered why we RSVP’s were not returned? How many of us have never returned one to someone inviting us to their celebration? Oh, we all come up with reasons. Something came up at the last minute. Something else was already on my calendar for that date. And the list can go on.

Jesus teaches consistently in Matthew’s Gospel that while absolutely everyone is invited to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the price of admission is high. The gate is narrow and the road is difficult, and few find it. The guest in this weekend’s parable represents those who have failed to understand this fundamental teaching. He has taken up the king’s generous invitation, but by failing to dress appropriately (even though, we must assume, he could have), he has demonstrated an overly casual attitude, treating the event as if it were simply a matter of “come as you are,” – an insult to the generosity of the king. The kingdom of God, we are reminded, is something we should not take for granted.

Bad and good alike are invited to the wedding feast. This is all of us. We, the Church, are not an exclusive club where we gather to celebrate our successes and revel in how much better we are than the next person. Rather, the Church is what Pope Francis called a *field hospital* where we come for healing, hope and help, believing, as St Paul said to the newly baptized at Philippi: *I can do all things in Him Who*

strengthens me. Our responsibility is to honor carefully this invitation and to **RSVP with conviction and love** – and then prepare, through living a sacramental life, to partake of the feast for eternity.

Returning to the Gospel story – we may want to ask: Why was the invitation rejected in the first place? We need only look to ourselves to realize how easy it is for us to make excuses for not responding to God’s invitation in our own lives. We are too busy with work or business; we are too preoccupied with money problems or relationships; we have a football game to go to, or dance lessons that are more important than Sunday Mass – and we hear people say - “God will understand.

If we are too busy for one another, or even too busy for God, then maybe we are just too busy! I don’t think God ever intended for us to be so busy that we don’t have time to take for ourselves – let alone for Him and especially to give Him thanks and ask continued blessings at the Sunday Eucharist.

Anyone can make excuses to not go to Church. But think of this one thing: Jesus, the Son of God and second person of the Trinity went to the local synagogue every week to slow down, to pray with the people, to pray to His Heavenly Father, to gain strength from His Father so as to meet the demands of everyday life. If Jesus Who is the Son of God / is God Himself saw the need and importance of weekly prayer with His neighbors in the local synagogue, how much more we humans should attend weekly Mass with our neighbors so that we can meet the demands of our daily lives.

This weekend we are being reminded of God’s invitation to each of us. Wear the correct clothing – not just the outward clothes, but also our works of righteousness and charity. And learn to slow down to enjoy all that God gives to us. Tomorrow may be too late to slow down.

Let us Pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace



Just for Laughs – The

catechist asked her Religious Education class to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. She was puzzled by one boy’s picture, which showed four people on an airplane, so she asked him which story it was meant to represent.

“The flight to Egypt,” he said. “I see,” said the catechist. “And that must be Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. But who is the fourth person?”

“Oh, that’s Punches the Pilot.”