



Exegesis of the 1st reading, IS 25: 6-10A

In his service to God, Isaiah was fully committed to steering people toward the path of life. Earlier, he gave oracles of salvation to motivate the king and people to seek security in God first. This reading belongs to a larger unit (Is 13—35) in which the prophet rebukes the nations for their prideful ways. However, by contrast, this passage celebrates the wonderful transformation possible once human pride is set aside and God's ways prevail. The opening verses of this chapter (Is 25:1—5) already praise God for ultimate victory over human pride.

1) *God's mountain.* This oracle celebrates what takes place on God's mountain where the ideal Jerusalem stands, and the nations gather to learn the ways of God. This mountain is a place where people enjoy the bounty of God's blessings. They enjoy rich food and the finest wines. This is a dramatic change from the past when human pride led to hunger and deprivation. Isaiah refers to the illusions of human pride as a veil that once enveloped the nations like a shroud. It obscured their view, not allowing them to see the real advantages that come from sincere and humble service to God.

2) *Place of blessings.* Mortal plans led only to tears shed for all the suffering and death introduced into the world. Now God wipes those tears away. At last, people look to God for security. Their vision is no longer obscured by arrogance and self-reliance. At last, they understand they must turn to God to gain access to all the benefits they once sought to gain through their own limited resources.

Exegesis of the 2nd reading, Phil 4:12-14,19-20

1) Serene. Through his service to God, Paul has learned to accept any circumstance that comes his way.

2) Grateful. Paul gives thanks for the kindness extended to him by people of faith. He knows God will provide for them just as God provided for him.

Exegesis of the Gospel, Mt 22: 1-14



This week's Gospel shares some features with last week's parable of the vineyard. Both parables are addressed to the same audience—the chief priests and the elders of the people. There are allegorical features that are similar (prophets/servants being killed) as well as both parables deal with the dynamic of rejection. Today's story, however, deals with the kingdom of heaven being compared to a wedding feast which calls to mind the messianic banquet (Is 25:6—9).

1) *Two invitations refused.* The servants issue an initial invitation to the wedding banquet, but surprisingly, all refuse to come. With a greater sense of urgency, a second invitation is sent by additional servants to other potential guests. They failed to detect any sense of urgency and, thus, refused the invitation. Not only that, but some of those invited guests mistreated the servants and killed them. The outraged king destroyed those murderers and burned their city (perhaps a reference to the burning of Jerusalem).

2) *Outcasts invited.* The king still insists on having the wedding banquet, but now the invitation does not go to the proper, acceptable guests. A new invitation is issued to anyone who will come. The servants are instructed to go out to the marginal areas and bring in the good and the bad. This time the king's invitation is accepted, and the banquet hall is filled. So far, the dynamic is understandable. Two invitations have been extended to those who would be considered worthy guests. Both groups refused and one group refused with violence and murder. The king, in turn, destroyed them and extended the invitation to anyone who would accept it. Finally, everything is in place for the banquet to begin. That is not so.

3) *No wedding garment.* As the king surveys the collection of guests finally assembled, he notices one person without a wedding garment. Many would say no big deal, but not the king. He severely reprimands the person without the wedding garment, binds him up, and throws him out of the banquet. Why? Though sinners were invited to the banquet, they were expected to repent. Just showing up is not enough. Many are called to salvation, but not all make it to the final election. There is no room for complacency on the part of anyone invited.



2) replacement by the gentiles. That interpretation does not hold up under careful examination. This is really about the rejection of certain Jewish leaders and their replacement with new and competent Jewish leadership. Matthew sees this as an intra-Jewish dispute, and not the replacement of the Jews by the gentiles. Later, that will in fact happen, but not at this time.

HOMILY CONNECTIONS

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brother' and sister's keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

"Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. That which human industry produces through the processing of raw materials, with the contribution of work, must serve equally for the good of all... Solidarity helps us to see the 'other' – whether a person, people or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our 'neighbor', a 'helper', to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God." *St. John Paul II, On Social Concerns no 39*

"Let us remember Paul VI's words: "For the Catholic Church, no one is a stranger, no one is excluded, and no one is far away "(Homily for the closing of the Second Vatican Council, 8 December 1965 Indeed, we are a single human family that is journeying on toward unity, making the most of solidarity and dialogue among peoples in the multiplicity of differences." *Message of Pope Francis for the 48th World Communications Day June 1, 2014.*

SUMMARY: Like the king in the parable in today's Gospel, our God requires a fitting



response (a proper wedding garment) to his invitation to enter the kingdom of God and eternal life.

A) **ATTENTION-GETTER:** There is an advice column in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* wherein Carolyn Hax responds to people who write in asking how they might handle various situations. [The homilist may want to mention a local paper and advice columnist instead.] Frequently, the issues involve hurt feelings—people feeling that others have slighted them or a family member in some way. Seldom does the inquirer try to see things from the other’s perspective, thus leading to a the-offender-has-to-change-his/her-ways attitude. The question posed is how do I make him or her change? Forgetting that we can't change others, we can only change ourselves—and that with difficulty.

B) **APPLICATION:** Both Isaiah and Jesus call us to view life from God's perspective rather than our own. It means getting out of ourselves and doing things God's way, living in solidarity with God and with each other. It means changing. That's the “cost” of salvation.

1) Isaiah describes what can happen when we accept

God's ways of living.

- a) Today's passage from Isaiah celebrates what can happen when people set aside their self-centeredness and pride, and do things God’s way.
- b) Using the image of a sumptuous meal, Isaiah speaks of the bounteous blessings available when people let go of their ways and accept God's way.
- c) There seems to be no end to what the Lord is willing to do for us.
- d) God offers it freely and generously, but we must accept it. God does not force his blessings upon us.
- e) We have an essential role to play—that of acceptance and cooperation.

2) The Phillipians, knowing that Paul was in jail, reached out to provide for His needs, however, he replied that he had no needs because he was sufficient with the grace of Christ. I think that also touched on the fact that when we live in the grace of Christ, we see our neighbors as brother not stranger and we



have the grace to live out of a spirit of abundance, not scarcity, because we are living in the love and trust that comes from Christ not the fear and selfishness that come from the evil one.

3) The parable of Jesus about the wedding feast.

- a) Jesus attempts to teach this message through the familiar parable of the king who invited guests to his son's wedding feast.
 - b) This is a generous offer to people who the king believes will willingly accept and come to celebrate.
 - c) But instead of accepting the offer, they refused.
 - d) At the second invitation, some not only refused the invitation, but killed the king's servants.
 - e) Needless to say, the king grew angry.
- 2) An allegory for us to listen to.
- a) We are the invited guests to God's offer of salvation who refuse the invitation often because we want to do things our way.
 - b) God offers so much, and we say, "No thanks, we'd rather do it our way."
 - c) And, of course, we cut off our own noses to spite our faces.
- 3) A new invitation issued.
- a) Unlike the king in the parable who grew angry at his guests' refusals and murderous behavior, God has compassion and even accepted Jesus' suffering and death in our stead.
 - b) God eternally offers generous rewards.
 - c) So, like the king in the story, God offers a new invitation. But unlike the king, God constantly offers the new invitation. There is no limit to God's love.
 - d) How we live in solidarity as Christians depends on how we respond to the *invitation* of love by our creator.
- 4) The mysterious wedding garment.
- a) But there's a twist and Jesus speaks of it in the parable.
 - b) The king who generously offered new invitations goes into the feast and finds one without a wedding garment.
 - c) Maybe we would be tempted to say, "Oh, for heaven's sake. Quit being so picky. At least the guy came." But then we would miss the point of the



parable.

- d) God (the king) is eternally and graciously generous, but we need to properly respond. His invitation is free, but there is a cost—letting go our pride, repentance and living in *solidarity* with each other.
- e) Solidarity is not just an adjective. It is a verb. To live in solidarity is to respond to the invitation of love given to us by the Creator... We are united as human beings in the fact that we are all made in the image of God. In our human experience we find that although we may seem different, the human experience with our needs, emotions, actions, etc. stay the same.

C) TRANSITION TO LITURGY OF EUCHARIST: We are here participating in the banquet of the Lord in which we eat and drink of his generosity in sacramental form. The bread and wine are truly his body and blood which prepare us for the eternal banquet of eternal life to which we are called. Our presence clearly says that we have not refused but have accepted to join together as the body of Christ, worshipping in solidarity; A fore-taste of the eternal banquet of heaven.