

28th Sunday- A
Deacon Pat Hall

[ISAIAH 25:6-10A](#); [PHILLIPIANS 4:12-14, 19-20](#); [MATTHEW 22:1-14](#)

Homilies are vehicles for pondering the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at:
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/101517.cfm>

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In today's proclamation of Holy Revelation, we are taken to and fro in our greatest hopes and our greatest fears.

In Isaiah we heard:

... the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.

... he will destroy death forever.

The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face;

This is an image of Paradise, a Paradise lost through Adam, but reclaimed in Jesus.

Frankly, using the image of feast and food works for me.

It touches a hunger, not just for my stomach, but for my heart; for Paradise is that for which you and I were made.

It makes me remember when as a child I would walk into my Grandma McMillan's house and be confronted by the smells of Thanksgiving. I can still feel the experience of well-being, of being safe, of being right, of being loved.

I expect I can take that with me to Heaven (and here savor as a taste of Heaven),

Then in Matthew, we are brought to another feast, but one with dire consequences:

Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'

Many are invited, but few are chosen."

Well, this certainly plays on my guilt, for surely I am not good enough.

Scripture says:

There is only One who is good. (Mt 19:17)

Is it my fear of damnation or is it the fulfillment of my heart's desire that brings me here today?

The answer for me is: yes. I bring both.

God created our hearts to desire him, to be empty without him-- to find their rest in him.

He also gave us the faculty of reflection so that we can recognize how we put that in jeopardy.

But yet, Matthew proclaims that I may be confident as the King calls for all to be gathered that can be found, the bad and good alike.

Now we can understand that as meaning that some who were called were good and some were bad.

But, I am led by St. Augustine's preaching which put forth that all were good and bad-- kind of like you and me.ⁱ

But what about this poor guy that came not dressed in a wedding garment? He was bound and cast out.

At first blush, this could offend our sense of charity.

My father, God rest his soul, used to speak of his not being able to attend his own high school graduation because he did not have good enough clothes to wear.

But surely, this man is not bound and cast out because he is not good enough.

Jesus throughout his ministry came to call sinners.

The man is left behind in the dark because he does not come prepared to participate in the wedding feast.

There is no confusion about what type of event to which he is called.

He showed up, but is not ready to participate and so participate he does not.

Let's look at the parable again.

One of the ways it functions is as an allegory.

The King is God and the bridegroom is Jesus.

Those allowed to feast are called to Heaven and those tossed bound into the darkness outside are cast into Hell.

So who is missing?

There is no mention of the bride. But yes, the bride is there.

Who is Christ's bride?

The bride is his Church. We are the Church. We are Christ's bride.

The one who came with desire for the feast, did not come prepared to be Christ's bride; he did not wear his wedding garment.

What he wore was an expression of his heart,
and his heart was not ready to be joined to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

How we express ourselves are windows to our hearts.

Sometimes our expression is at first an action to encourage our hearts to follow.

Fr. James and I have certain ministerial roles in our participation seen clearly by the vestments we wear.

Even as we vest for Mass, there are special prayers for the donning of this and the next article of apparel, submitting to the Lord's graces in preparing our hearts to participate and serve in holiness.

I remember at Jan's and my wedding 41 years ago the beautiful dress that she wore made by her own hands.

She even made the tie I wore from the same material of her dress.

What a demonstration of love and desire to become my wife.

It was all part of our coming prepared to participate in the Sacrament that would nourish us for all our married years.

And so let us return again to the one who came without his wedding garment. What does he lack? Again, I allow St. Augustine to lead our inquiry.

He does not lack faith in God. He knows who the King is. He knows who the bridegroom is. Faith and belief alone do not gain access to the feast. Even the demons expelled by Jesus knew that Jesus was the Son of God.

What gains us entry to the feast, what is that nuptial garment we are to don?

Is it the Sacraments? You can see how they are shared in common by good and bad.

Is it Baptism? No doubt without baptism no one can come to God: but not every one who receives baptism comes to God.

The Altar perhaps? Or That which is received at the altar? We see many eat of It, and eat and drink judgment to themselves.

What then is it? Fasting? The wicked also fast.

Is it running to the church? The wicked run there too.

Is it working miracles then? Not only do good and bad work miracles, but at times not even the good work them. [Such was seen] in the Old Testament.

Charity is the Nuptial Garment. Other gifts without charity avail nothing.

But not any charity; for often they who seem to love each other are men who share an evil conscience.

We find this in Scripture, in St. Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians:

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.

And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

The charity of which we speak is not defined the same by all. Charity is not the giving of things. It is the giving of one's heart—of love.

What was interesting to me is that when I translated "charity" into Latin, I got the word "caritas". Yet when I translated "caritas" back into English, I got "love of human kind."

May I bring this together again with an exhortation from St. Augustine:

You know the Bridegroom: it is Christ.

You know the Bride: the Church.

Honour the Bride: Honour the Bridegroom.

If you fittingly honour the spouses you shall be their children.

Therefore go forward in this.

Love the Lord, and there learn to love yourselves,

You may then safely love your neighbours as yourselves.

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ⁱ St. Augustine, *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, v. 4, pp. 219-222