

Ordinary Time 28th Sunday (Year A)

Homily by Fr. Maraiiah

Today's Scripture readings offer us a standing invitation to the everlasting joy of the *Heavenly Banquet* and a loving warning to stay ready always for this *Heavenly banquet* by constantly wearing the *wedding garment*, *i.e.*, remaining in a state of grace by avoiding sins and by doing good.

In the first reading, Isaiah describes the Messianic banquet on the Lord's mountain in the Holy City of Jerusalem, which Yahweh is preparing for His people. The "Good News" is that it is a great feast of "*rich food and choice wines*." But, for the children of Israel, the "bad news" is that Yahweh invites all people, including Gentiles, to the banquet. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23), presents God as the Good Shepherd Who nourishes, leads, and protects His flock.

In the second reading, St. Paul advises the Philippians to put their trust in the power and goodness of a providing God, Who, in Jesus, has given His Church everything His followers will need to participate in the Heavenly Banquet.

In today's Gospel, by telling an allegoric parable of judgment in the Temple of Jerusalem two days before his arrest, Jesus accuses the Jewish religious and civil leaders of rejecting God's invitation to the Heavenly Banquet given to them through God's Own Son, Himself. They have rejected the invitation by not listening to the Good News preached by Jesus and by not reforming their lives. This invitation was repeatedly extended to Israel through the prophets, including John the Baptist. But the leadership contemporary with Jesus have rejected the reality that Jesus was the fulfillment of all prophecy, refused to accept God's invitation to righteous living given through John the Baptist and through Jesus, and is now planning to kill God's own Son, Jesus. Hence, God is inviting the sinners and Gentiles for His banquet, and that is why Jesus is keeping the company of sinners.

Life messages: 1) We need to keep wearing the wedding garment of holiness and righteousness, the state of grace, all the time, do good for everyone, and appreciate and receive God's graces in the Church: a) We received the "*wedding garment*" of sanctifying grace in Baptism; the other Sacraments provide the additional graces we need to retain it. b) Our participation in the Eucharistic celebration and in personal and family prayers helps us to recharge our spiritual batteries and enables us to lead Spirit-filled, prayerful lives of doing good for all. c) Jesus nourishes us in the Church through the proclamation of word of God and through His Body and Blood offered to us as spiritual Food and Drink in Holy Communion.

2) We need to participate in the Eucharistic banquet with proper preparation by repenting of our sins and by actively participating in the prayers and singing during the Holy Mass. Participating in Holy Mass is the best preparation and greatest Source of power for our future participation in the Heavenly banquet.