

Sunday, October 11, 2020

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 25:6-10

Responsorial: Psalm 23:1-6

2nd Reading: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Accepting God's Invitation to Jesus' Wedding Banquet

Many are invited, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

Does this sentence give you a chill? Maybe it makes you wonder, "I hope I get chosen for heaven." Or maybe you question the justice in it. "If God has already invited people, why would he not choose them?" Today's parable offers some answers.

First, we hear about a king who decided to look elsewhere when the first set of invitees refused to come to his son's wedding and abused his messengers. "Those who were invited were not worthy to come," he said (Matthew 22:8). Then, we see him telling his servants to go invite everyone they could find.

Look at the "worthiness" of the king's initial invitees. They turned out to be murderers, so the king probably knew they weren't "worthy" to begin with. But that didn't matter. Even if they had a sinful past, that did not have to disqualify them. By accepting the invitation and making their way toward the banquet hall, they would have placed themselves on the path of repentance and new life. The same is true of the second group, which was made up of the "bad and good alike" (Matthew 22:10). They were not bound by whatever they had done or failed to do earlier. The same is true for you. Your worthiness is not based on whether you have done everything right. You become worthy as you accept his invitation. Every step you take that brings you closer to the heavenly banquet hall makes you more worthy. It weaves another thread of the garment of holiness that all the saints in heaven wear.

God invites everyone to his banquet. His light shines "on the bad and the good" and "on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Ever and always, he is calling out, urging, even begging us to come to him. Everyone is called; may we all accept the invitation so that we can be counted among the "chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

"Thank you, Jesus, for inviting me to your banquet! Help me to choose to live for you this day."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. It closes with these words: On that day it will be said: “Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the Lord for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!” For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.*
 - What do the opening words from the first reading mean to you?
 - Do you believe that every day in prayer, you have an opportunity to consume the *rich food* of the word of God and *rejoice and be glad* in his presence? Is this your attitude? If not, why not?
 - How do you usually approach your prayer times? Do you try to pray every day? If not, why not?
 - What do the closing words of the reading mean to you?
2. The responsorial psalm, Psalm 23, begins with these words: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.* It ends with these words: *Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil; for you are at my side, with your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.*
 - Our familiarity with Psalm 23 can cause us to miss some of its uplifting words. How conscious are you during the day of the Lord's presence, and are you able to say these words of the psalmist? *In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.* How does he refresh your soul?
 - No matter where your day leads you, what can you do during the day to make yourself more aware of the ending words of the psalm?
3. The second reading contains some of St. Paul's most uplifting words: *I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*
 - What do the Scripture verses quoted above mean to you? In what ways could they help you as you turn to God and ask for his help in difficult situations? Do you think some are worth trying to memorize? If not, why not?
 - How often do you “consult” the Lord when making a decision versus just relying on your own wisdom and strength? What practical things can you do to involve him more in your daily decision making?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus' parable begins with these words: *The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. It continues with these words of the king: The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.* The Gospel reading ends with how the king deals with a guest who was not wearing a wedding garment: *“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.*
 - What message was Jesus conveying to the chief priests and elders (and to us) with his parable? Why do you think the king's response was so harsh to the invited guests and a man not dressed in a wedding garment?
 - What do you think is the right wedding garment that Jesus was describing to the people – and to us?
 - Do you see the invitation to the *wedding feast* as a special grace to you to come God's *wedding feast for his son*?
 - What steps can you take to overcome obstacles in your life that can keep you from ignoring this invitation?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and includes these words: *“Your worthiness is not based on whether you have done everything right. You become worthy as you accept his invitation. Every step you take that brings you closer to the heavenly banquet hall makes you more worthy.”* It closes with these words: *“God invites everyone to his banquet. His light shines ‘on the bad and the good’ and ‘on the just and the unjust’ (Matthew 5:45). Ever and always, he is calling out, urging, even begging us to come to him. Everyone is called; may we all accept the invitation so that we can be counted among the ‘chosen’ (Matthew 22:14).”*
 - Do you agree with these words of the meditation: *“Your worthiness is not based on whether you have done everything right? You become worthy as you accept his invitation?”* Why or why not?
 - Do you agree with the closing words of the meditation? Why or why not?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for his invitation to his banquet, and for the grace to give your life more fully to him and live for him each day. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Thank you, Jesus, for inviting me to your banquet! Help me to choose to live for you this day.”

[Maurice Blumberg is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He is also a current leader of his parish ChristLife, Healing, and Men's Ministries. He can be contacted at mblumberg@aol.com.]