

**28<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; CYCLE - A; Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**Isaiah 25: 6-10; Philippians. 4: 12-14; Matthew 22: 1-14**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In every culture, the most attractive item at any social gathering is the delicious banquet. In a way that is the concluding part or the climax of the celebration. Both in the Old Testament and New Testament the heavenly joy is compared to a great banquet. It is jokingly said that in heaven there is a 24 hour buffet going on and without any fear of heart attack, cholesterol or fattening we can eat anything we want at any time. Today's both readings, the book of Isaiah and gospel speak about a great banquet. Prophet Isaiah was prophesying about the Messianic banquet, to which one day all would be invited, which would be materialized in the person of Jesus.

The uniqueness of Matthew's gospel can be found in his 13 Kingdom Parables. We are given another lengthy Kingdom parable in today's gospel. Commenting on this parable of the wedding banquet, *John Newton* who is remembered for this famous hymn, '*The Amazing Grace*,' once said, "*When I get to heaven I shall see three wonders there. The first wonder will be, to see many people there whom I did not expect to see; the second wonder will be, to miss many people whom I expected to be there and the greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there.*" In this parable too Matthew repeats the same theme that the expected ones will be kept out and the unexpected will find a place in the heavenly kingdom. In other words, the first will be the last and the last will be the first.

In its original setting Jesus told this parable to expose the infidelity of the Jewish people who was his first priority, during his Messianic ministry. In this parable Jesus also defends his ministry among the tax collectors, sinners and gentiles. Though Jesus gave the first preference to the Jewish people, they refused him and as a result he extended the invitation to the so called outcasts of the society who accepted it wholeheartedly. When Matthew recorded this parable in his gospel around A.D. 80 he made certain adaptations according to the situations. For Matthew the first set of servants who were sent to the invitees stand for the Prophets who reminded the Jewish people of their invitation by God, whom they refused. The second set of servants is the Apostles who started their ministry first among the Jews. As they refused them they extended their apostolate among the gentiles who responded very positively.

The invitees in the gospel didn't care about the banquet and went for their own business. At the same time, remember, they didn't go for any bad things. They all went for their personal and honest business. In the busy world of today, most of the people, though they are baptized Christians, give undue priority to the material world and ambitions, forgetting the things of eternity. *In the modern world many of us can be so busy making a living and thus fail to make a life; we can be so busy with the administration and the organization of life that we forget life itself.* If we refuse the invitation of Christ, someday our greatest pain will lie not in the things we suffer but in the realization of the precious things we have missed. **Only a person who can keep a balance between the material and spiritual things will be able to enjoy both the world and the Kingdom of Heaven.** Whatever way we try, we are not able to keep our life forever in this world. Our life, health and wellbeing will never go the way we choose or wish. In other words we don't have much control over them; whereas we all have the choice of our eternal life or eternal death.

The day when you and I received the baptism, the invitation to the heavenly banquet is given to us. But it is our choice whether we should accept it and go for it or refuse it. Very often, being busy in the material world many forget about this great invitation and act as if the life is going to continue forever in the world. You and I are busy constructing many things in the world for us. But one day when we stand before the judgment seat of the Lord, he will ask us one simple question: **'You have been constructing many things on earth for you; what have you constructed for you in heaven?'** If we had spent some time to construct something in heaven, no doubt we have a place there.