

## Commentary on the Readings for Sunday, October 15, 2023

### The 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The first sentence of the Gospel reading for today gives us a clue to the theme of all the Readings: *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like ..."* In this case, heaven is likened to a unique banquet. In scripture, when the word "like" is used, it means just that - somewhat like, but not the same as. Therefore, we must keep this in mind when reading these and other passages of scripture. Here we have a small glimpse of heaven where the mere presence of God is sufficient to fulfill all our needs. Suffering, poor health and death are no more. However, there are certain requirements or restrictions that precede our entry.

In the **First Reading** from the ***Prophet Isaiah (25:6-10)***, the Prophet is preaching to the Israelites of the 8th century B.C. a message of hope during a very difficult period. He tells them that if they hold fast to the teachings of Yahweh, the God of Israel, they will be safe and all their needs will be provided. In the broader picture, this is a prophesy of the end of the world as we know it and of what awaits all mankind who are faithful to the God of all nations and all creation.

The **Responsorial Psalm (23:1-6)** is the beautiful prayer that we all know as "The Lord is my Shepherd." It is an allegory of what heaven will be like when God leads us through this "valley of tears." However, if we do not let God lead us through this life, we put ourselves outside of the "pasture of heaven" where no one else will come to lead us - a very frightening thought, indeed.

The **Second Reading** is from ***St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (4:12-20)***. As we have said before, "Philippians" is all about humility. In this passage, Paul is saying that he has experienced both the good things of this world as well as the not-so-good. However, he has come to rely upon God for everything and in doing so he has been set free from the worries of this world and just lets God lead him through life knowing that the end will be the eternal heavenly banquet. This might sound simplistic, but the point that Paul is making is; when you walk "hand-in-hand" with Jesus, the cares of this world are much easier to carry.

The **Gospel Reading** is from ***Matthew (22:1-14)***. In this story, God is giving the banquet and invitations go out to all mankind. He has especially invited the Jewish people, who were the first invited guests, but they didn't accept Him in the person of Jesus Christ. And so, God invites people of every nation to come. It was the custom of the culture of Jesus' time for the host to provide a "wedding garment" that is proper clothing for the guests if they did not have such. This wedding garment is symbolic of spiritual purity. In spite of this, someone tries to enter without the proper garment, again symbolic of a soul not purged of sin. He refused to do or wear what was offered by the host and, by doing so, he put himself outside the banquet hall of heaven. This last point is a veiled description of how mankind condemns himself from heaven, by not following the lead of the Divine Shepherd, Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Humility and Obedience are the keys to heaven. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

**MFB**