



28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)



Matthew 22: 1 – 14

Once more Jesus spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees in parables: “The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.

“Again he sent other slaves saying, “Tell those who have been invited: “Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.” But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

“Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore, into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

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Reflection:

God’s relationship with his people is often compared to a wedding. God loves us like a parent who loves their child(ren) and like a husband loves his wife. In today’s parable, God’s Son is getting married. The sacrifice (of oxen and fat calves) has already been made (symbolic of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross that we celebrate at Mass). Everything is ready. The only thing that is missing is **us**.

In this parable we are told of the great work that God has put into this relationship, that he has done it all for us. But, so often, we are uncaring or forgetful and even get mad at being asked to come and celebrate.

God’s response, in sending his troops to destroy their city, may seem harsh. Around the time that Matthew’s Gospel was written, Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans. Some of Jesus’ followers thought that this was God’s response to what had been done to Jesus and his followers.

God's response in opening the doors to his wedding banquet to every person that was willing to accept the invitation is good news for us. As long as we believe (as we are robed) we have free access to his wedding banquet, both here on earth as in heaven.



Table discussion (at mealtime):

Who were some of the people that brought God's invitation to you? How did you learn about God's love from them?



Sally's First Communion:

The day had finally come. Sally was all excited. Together with her classmates, they had been preparing themselves for a long time. Today they would be receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion for the first time.

"What a beautiful white dress," her aunt said, as Sally stepped into the living room. "and what adorable white shoes," her aunt added.

"Who's the unlucky guy?", her brother joked.

"What do you mean, who's the unlucky guy?" Sally sneered at him.

"White dress... white shoes... hair all made up... it looks to me as if you are getting married." Toby answered.

"I am not getting married," Sally cried out. "I am dressed up to receive First Communion."

"And you look very beautiful," her aunt remarked, "Like a bride for her husband."

"What do you mean, aunty?" Sally asked.

"Well, Toby isn't that far off. No, you are not getting married, but you will be receiving from the wedding banquet. That's how Jesus spoke of his gift to us, that he would give his very self for us."

"Come and sit next to me, both of you," her aunt continued. "Let me tell you the story. Jesus came to show God's great love for us. He came to invite us into a very special relationship with him. He knew we might not always be willing, that sometimes we turn our backs on him and on the ones we love. He also knew he would have to suffer and die because of our stubbornness and our failure to listen to his invitation."

"But he loves us, so much that he was even willing to die for us, so that in seeing his great love we might turn back to God with all our hearts."

“What does this have to do with Sally’s First Communion?” Toby interrupted.

“It has everything to do with Sally’s First Communion,” his aunt continued. “We were not there when Jesus died for us. We were not present. God wanted to show his love for the whole world... even years and years later. So, before he died, Jesus had a special meal with his friends. During that meal, he took some bread, blessed it and broke it, saying: “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body which will be given up for you.” And he did the same with a chalice of wine saying, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.” Each time we celebrate in this meal, we are brought into the presence of Christ on the cross, the presence of his love.”

“What is a “covenant”?” Toby asked.

“I’m glad you asked,” their aunt replied. “The word “Covenant” is another word for “Marriage”. Through his sacrifice on the cross he invites us to love him as much as he loves us. We call it Holy Communion, oneness with God. And this is why this is such a special day for Sally. It’s a new beginning of an even closer unity with God and with God’s people.”

“I hope I don’t have to wear a dress,” Toby joked.

“No, that would look silly,” their aunt chuckled. “Dress shirt and pants will do.”



Parenting Corner:

The parable of the King’s Son’s Wedding Banquet points to both the banquet of the Eucharist/the Mass and the final banquet at the end of time. There is great joy in the King’s proclamation that “the sacrifices had been offered” and “everything is ready”, now is the time to celebrate in the festivity of the eternal bond that has been created.

One of the most ancient words used for the Sacrament of Holy Communion is “Eucharist”. It comes from the early Greek period of the Church meaning “Thanksgiving”, a reminder of the joy and hope that is ours in the gift of Christ for us and our salvation.

On this day, dedicated to “Thanksgiving”, take a moment to compile a short list of things for which you are thankful. Try to include both physical and spiritual gifts. You may want to help your child(ren) do the same. Younger children may find it easier to express themselves in art or in a short conversation with you. This could also be done in conjunction with a nature walk, while cuddled up in front of a fire and/or while enjoying some hot chocolate or a special treat.

You may also want to collect some pine cones, leaves, feathers, decorative rocks from outside to create a family centrepiece for your thanksgiving table.



The Thanksgiving Meal (Family Prayer):

Light a candle (optional) and join hands prior to sitting down.

Song: Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below.

Praise him above you heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, Creator of all that is good, we thank you for bringing us together around this meal to celebrate your great love for us. Thank you for all our many blessings and for the gift of your love. Bless this food, our conversation and our time together. Please provide for all those in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Have everyone tape their picture or list of things for which they are thankful on the fridge, each in turn.



Thanksgiving Prayer (at bedtime):

Lord God, Creator of all that is good, I thank you for all the many blessings of this day. I thank you, especially, for being so close to me and for (something that I really enjoyed about this day). Please grant me the joy to be thankful each day. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



St. Pius Xth:

Giuseppe Sarto was born into a poor Italian family in 1835. As a young boy his parents struggled to pay for his education. “Beppi” would walk for an hour to school on his bare feet, carrying his new shoes in his hands. This was his way of making his shoes last longer.

“Beppi” had a great love for God and wanted to receive him in Holy Communion when he was still quite small. But, in his day, the Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated when children were seven and First Holy Communion was celebrated in High School. This meant that “Beppi” had to wait a long time.

When “Beppi” got older, he wanted to be a priest, but he had to find someone to help him pay for his studies. Luckily, he did, and he progressed through the years. “Beppi” was known as a good student, always willing to learn, to help out and to pray.

“Beppi” started his ministry as a priest under the guidance of an older priest. His love for God and his care for the people were so genuine that many of his parishioners loved him. He was a great teacher, wonderful with children, and very generous to the poor.

“Beppi”'s teaching skills were noticed by his local Bishop, and he was asked to teach in the Seminary. All those who knew him, thought well of him, not only because he was a wise and gentle man, but because he had an incredibly good sense of humour and laughed readily. His fellow professors said that when “Beppi” was finally asked to become a Bishop, the Seminary halls fell silent, that his joy for life was dearly missed.

“Beppi” didn't want to become a Bishop. As a “poor boy” he didn't think himself worthy of such an honour. But, the Pope insisted, and with the persuasive words of his local Bishop, “Beppi” finally agreed.

“Beppi” was the best of bishops. His kindness to the poor, his clear and solid teaching and his love for God and for people was clear to see. The light in his office never seemed to go out and his ability to look after all matters, big or small, was amazing.

People who knew him, began talking about bigger things. One man even told him he would become a Cardinal and, later, a Pope. Bishop “Beppi” didn't think much of these predictions. After all, he saw himself as a poor boy asked to do God's work.

Bishop “Beppi” was asked to become Cardinal Archbishop of Venice. This was no small thing. The Cardinal Archbishop of Venice was treated as a Prince. The people of Venice did not want to welcome him, “Send us someone else,” they said. They didn't want a “poor man” to become their leader.

But it didn't take long for their hearts to change. Cardinal Archbishop “Beppi”'s love for them never failed. When he was finally elected as Pope, many of these same people found it very difficult to see him go.

When Giuseppe Sarto was elected Pope, he took a new name. From that moment onwards, he would be known as Pope Pius X. Pope Pius X was a wonderful Pope. During the eleven years he spent in Rome he focused his attention on teaching, on peacemaking and on service to the poor. He remembered the time when he was young, and he had to wait until he was a teenager before he celebrated his First Holy Communion. As Pope, in 1910, because of his love for children, he changed the age requirements. From now on children could celebrate First Holy Communion at age 7 and the Sacrament of Confirmation was moved until later. To join in the “wedding banquet of the Lord”, this was our greatest joy as Christians.

Pope Pius X died shortly after the beginning of World War I. Many say, he died of a broken heart. He could not accept that Christian Nations would fight one another. He had done everything he could to prevent it from happening. When war broke out in Europe, his spirit failed him.