

A Banquet Like No Other  
10/15/17

In case you missed it, there was a direct or indirect reference to food, especially feasts and banquets, in all four of our readings today. Isaiah tell us of a feast of rich food and choice wines. In the responsorial psalm, we heard that the Lord will spread a table before us. Paul says that God will fully supply whatever we need, in accord with the glorious riches in Christ Jesus. And of course, the Gospel presents us with the wedding feast for a king's son. I don't know about you but these readings almost make my mouth start watering.

Besides the idea of feasts and banquets, what else are we to take away from these readings? Well, again, it's pretty obvious in the passage from Isaiah and the Gospel. Isaiah says the Lord of hosts will provide the feast for all peoples. And Jesus tells us the king told his servants to invite to the feast whomever they found. And who do the servants find? The bad and good alike. People of all states of life were invited in. And it shouldn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that both the feast of Isaiah and the banquet of Jesus are references to heaven.

When Pope Francis released his apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of Love*, it caused lots of reactions. Dominican Laurie Brink thinks that one of the most powerful lines is a quote from a homily the Pope preached at a Mass celebrated with the new cardinals in February, 2015. "The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone forever; it is to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart . . . For true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous." Brink suggests those words sum up today's readings.

She goes on to say that God provides for all people, friend and foe alike, on the mountain described in Isaiah. God's provident love is gracious and unconditional. The king in the parable sends his servants out to invite to the wedding banquet whomever they find after others rejected his invitation.

She then reminds us that someone is cast out for not wearing the proper garment. This tells us that even though all are invited, we still need to dress for the banquet by asking for and responding to God's

gratuitous and loving balm. The wedding garment we are given entails clothing ourselves with gratitude, humility and love, like Paul speaking to the Philippians. He learned how to respond with humility and gratitude to all of life's situations.

She concludes by saying that Paul's example challenges her to be grateful for what she has in abundance or want, and give God glory and praise at all times. Jesus reminds her to clothe herself with gratitude for God's generosity and His mercy. Pope Francis challenges us to avoid condemning anyone forever. We should all be vessels that pour out the balm of God's unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous mercy so others can dress for the banquet too.

Let me finish by sharing the lyrics to a song that's been haunting me lately. It's by Mandisa and Toby Mac and entitled *Bleed the Same*. We all bleed the same. We're more beautiful when we come together. We all bleed the same. So tell me why, tell me why we're divided.

Woke up today, another headline, another innocent life is taken in the name of hatred. So hard to take. And if we think that it's all good, then we're mistaken 'cause my heart is breaking. Are you left? Are you right? Pointing fingers, taking sides, when are we gonna realize? We all bleed the same. If we're gonna fight, let's fight for each other; if we're gonna shout, let love be the cry.

Tell me, who are we to judge someone by the kind of clothes they're wearing or the color of their skin? Are you black? Are you white? Aren't we all the same inside? Father, open our eyes to see! Only love can drive out all the darkness. What are we fighting for? We were made to carry one another; we were made for more. So Father God, I pray that our families will come together right now and seek Your face. You will forgive our sins and You will heal our incredible land.

And so, let's not judge each other based on our outsides, on the garments we wear, but rather let's look at the insides. Instead of fighting against each other, let's fight for each other. Let's let our shouts be of love not hate. Maybe, just maybe, then we'll all be sitting together at the same banquet, enjoying rich food and choice wines. Let's make it happen one relationship at a time.