THE TWENTY EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, OCTOBER 11, 2020

**COME TO THE FEAST: EMBRACING “THE HOPE THAT BELONGS TO OUR CALL.”**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Last Sunday’s reading showed that God planted us as the choicest vines in a fertile and well cultivated vineyard. He gave us everything we needed to flourish and “bear fruit that should abide” (John 15:16). God calls us to the fullness of salvation and definitive happiness called heaven or the beatific vision.  What is our response? Will we accept or reject this invitation?

This week, we shall look into the hope that belongs to God's invitation.  The theme is *Come to the Feast, Embracing the Hope that Belongs to our Call*.

First, let us ask, what is this invitation, the Lord issues?  It is an invitation to the great feast, the wedding feast for his Son. Whom did the Son of the King marry?  In the parable, the Son of the King is mentioned as the Bridegroom but  the name of his bride is not mentioned.  Who is the Bride and what is the name of the King’s son?  Christ, the Son of the Living God is the Bridegroom and the Son of the King. God is the King.  The Church and indeed, all people are his bride. We come to this conclusion because the invitation was to everyone. The King stated, “Invite to the feast whomever you find” (Mtt 22:9). No one is excluded. The King’s order was even more expressive in the gospel according to St Luke, “‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21).

Christ the Lord espouses himself to all. This marriage is not biological. It is theological, spiritual and supernatural. “This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5:32). “Your maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth, he is called” (Isaiah 54:5).

Against this background, one sees how fittingly the parable of the wedding banquet captures the hope that belongs to our call. The Bible says, "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” (Matthew 22:1). The King was not deterred by this initial rebuff. He reached out two more times until the wedding hall was filled to the brim. ”The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good'’ alike, and the hall was filled with guests” (Matthew 22:10). There is room in God’s heart for all God’s children. However, to enter one must put on the wedding gown of righteousness (Revelation 19:8). This means the right interior disposition of repentance, change of heart and mind, a consistent life of good deeds “(Matthew 7:21–23) and being “in harmony with the commandments as is a lute with its strings”(St Ignatius of Antioch).

How does this tie in with the first reading and the responsorial Psalm? The first reading says, “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” (Isaiah 25:6). This foreshadows the wedding banquet God gave for his Son which the gospel eloquently spoke of. To describe how this hope that belongs to our call is brought about, the Bible used the title, Lamb of God” for our Lord twenty-eight times in the twenty-two chapters of the Book of Revelation. “The Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).  The voice from heaven confirms how this will happen: “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God will always be with them [as their God]. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4). For he will destroy the last enemy of man. The hope that belongs to our call dawns in a hitherto unheard way when the Word has become flesh, dwelt among us and opened access to the Father to us. The Word who became flesh is the Son of the king and the Good Shepherd who leads us in the right path for his name sake.  He is the one who spread the table   before us in the sight of our foes. He anoints our heads with oil and our cups overflow (Psalm 23:3, 5).

God Almighty, “Delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Put another way, "In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh" (Ephesians 2:13-14).

What is our response to the invitation of our Lord?   May our response not be like those of Herodians   and Pharisees. After hearing the parable, they sought a way to entrap our Lord. Rather than heed the call, they began to ask our Lord questions about paying taxes to Caesar. They reduced theology to politics and economics. That was a wrong move. The way   forward is to accept God's invitation and dress up in the wedding garment unlike the fellow who slipped into the wedding hall without the wedding garment. To reject God’s invitation is to choose  “the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth” (Matthew 22:13).

Each time the holy Mass is celebrated on a Sunday and weekdays, the Lord invites us over to a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, the heavenly Jerusalem, when God will destroy death forever (see Hebrews 12:22-24).  In the Mass, the juicy, rich food is the body of Christ and the pure, choice wine is the blood of Christ. **Christ Jesus whose body and blood we receive is the hope of our call.**  "He will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever and wipe away the tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:7-8). Sever all bonds that hinder you from accepting God.  DO NOT REJECT THE CALL. Come to the Feast.