

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

Last Sunday, our Scripture readings reminded us of the generosity of our God who provides us with all our needs and trusts us to tenderly care for His creation and called us to be faithful, grateful and generous. Today, we celebrate the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in ordinary time of the year. Our Scripture readings of today invite us to a joyful celebration where God himself is featured as the host. They also remind us that we must be prepared and ready, wearing the garment that has been given to be worn at this celebration. It is important to remember that it is to great and joyful celebration that the Christian is invited. It is joy that he loses when he refuses the invitation.

In the first reading, Isaiah describes the Messianic feast on the Lord's mountain which God is preparing for His people, and it is going to be a great feast of "rich food and choice wines." The amazing thing about this invitation is that God is inviting all people, including Gentiles, to the banquet. The end of it all is going to be a celebration in which God stands ready to satisfy the hunger and thirst of every guest. Our God is pictured as leaning over and wiping the tears of those who mourn and inviting the guests at the banquet to let go off past hurts, failures and disappointments and rejoice in the gift of life and love being offered.

The Responsorial Psalm sings about the Good Shepherd Who feeds, leads, and keeps his sheep safe. In the second reading, St. Paul advises the Philippians to put their trust in the grace of God and rejoice in his provident care. He thanks the Philippians for wearing the new garment of generosity, thoughtfulness and sacrificial love.

The Gospel speaks of the tragedy of those who rejected the invitation and of those who came without wearing the "wedding garment", the garment of holiness and grace. Things that make us refuse the invitation are not bad in themselves. We tend to become too pre-occupied with the immediate needs and lose touch with that which is lasting, enduring and eternal. Our priorities get mixed up. Often, we become so busy with the affairs of life that we forget life itself. Often, we get so busy with the Lord's work that we forget the Lord of the work!

Our Sacred Scriptures and our Spiritual tradition call us to choose between life and death, wisdom and foolishness, the way of God and the way of the world, the way of peace and way of war, the way of Grace and the way of sin and today's Scripture readings call us to choose to wear the "wedding garment", the garment of holiness and grace and share the banquet which God himself is hosting.

We cannot go on wearing the same garment that we were wearing before the call of God. We are given a new garment in Baptism and called to bring this garment unstained into everlasting life! Wearing our new garment and keeping it unstained demand constant vigilance and intentional living. We must watch and guide our conduct, our behavior patterns, our moral standards, our choices and decisions, our attitudes, and our values. We must live godly lives, noble lives and virtuous lives that reflect our Christian Character and give witness to who we are and whose we are. Our behavior patterns, our relationships, the choices we make, the company we keep, the books we read, the language we use, the songs we sing, the jokes we share...the garment we wear must reflect who we are and whose we are!!!

Pope Francis reminds us, "Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful temples and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and gives witness to him every day. We are not a religion of ideas, of pure theology, of beautiful things and commandments. No, we are a people who follow Jesus Christ and gives witness to Jesus Christ -- and this witness sometimes ends up being giving one's life."

Witnessing to Christ is not a matter of carrying a Bible, wearing a cross, saying a few prayers, or teaching church doctrines although they are good, commendable as well as necessary practices. Witnessing is more about our attitudes, our behavior patterns, our lifestyle, our relationships, and the way we are present wherever we may be...the garment we wear. We can choose to go on wearing the dirty, old garment or the clean and pure garment that we received at our baptism, the "outward sign of our Christian dignity" and "bring that dignity unstained into everlasting life," as the ritual of baptism tells us.

Pope Francis advises us about the kind of garment that we must wear: "If we want to have real meaning and fulfilment, as you want and as you deserve, I say to each one of you, "Put on faith", and your life will take on a new flavor, it will have a compass to show you the way; "put on hope" and every one of your days will be enlightened and your horizon will no longer be dark, but luminous; "put on love", and your life will be like a house built on rock, your journey will be joyful, because you will find many friends to journey with you. "Put on Christ!" in your life, and you will find a friend in whom you can always trust; "put on Christ" and you will see the wings of hope spreading and letting you journey with joy towards the future; "put on Christ" and your life will be full of his love; it will be a fruitful life."

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been. Reflect also on the garment you have been wearing... clean, godly, noble, virtuous... as you went about doing your daily chores and fulfilling your responsibilities.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today's mass....

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 15, 2023

**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another
with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with
gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name
of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
(Colossians 3:15-17)**

Collect

May your grace, O Lord, we pray,
at all times go before us and follow after
and make us always determined
to carry out good works.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**The body is blessed by movement and action.
The spirit is blessed by silence, stillness and serenity.**

Isaiah 25:6-10

This excerpt describes Isaiah's vision of the whole creation moving toward a final day of unending celebration, to a joyful feast where people from all over the earth gather with God and his heavenly court. Rich food and choice wine symbolize fulfillment, complete satisfaction. A loving and benevolent and gracious God will provide for all people.

The invitation we hear in this excerpt reaches out with hope to those who hunger and thirst for God and all that God has to offer. Isaiah offers his dream of God being host at a rich banquet

that is ready to welcome all people, not just a few selected people. What a wonderful thought for us to contemplate: the end of it all is going to be a celebration in which God stands ready to satisfy the hunger and thirst of every guest.

This excerpt and the Gospel reading of this Sunday, carry another significant thought for us to reflect on. Our gracious God, who is featured as the host of the banquet, is also concerned about the moral and spiritual well-being of the guests. Our God is pictured as leaning over and wiping the tears of those who mourn, removing the veil from their faces and so on. Our God invites the guests at the banquet to let go of past hurts and disappointments and rejoice in the gift of life and love being offered.

Take a moment! Be still! Listen to the invitation to rejoice! Respond to the invitation to be fed, nourished and strengthened by the gift of all that our gracious God offers!

Psalm 23

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me;
He refreshes my soul.....**

David had been a shepherd, and he knew how to care for the sheep and what it cost him. He became shepherd of his people. He had to figure out how he should care for them. He knew the sheep well and now he must come to know his people, their ways, their needs, and their concerns. This problem gave him a new awareness of what God, the true shepherd, is like in his relationship to his people.

Like the shepherd.... God knows his people just as they are in all their needs, in their greed, in their stubbornness and stupidity as well as in their value and worth. Like a shepherd...God reaches out, searches out the lost and keeps them safe. Like a shepherd.... God provides food, drink, safety, light in darkness, Grace, comfort and strength in “dark valley moments.” This Psalm proclaims the enduring, steadfast, loyal, unconquerable love of God, the good shepherd, who will never let us slip out of his hands!

Philippians 4:12-14; 19-20

In this excerpt, we read about Paul expressing his gratitude for the support that the Philippian community gave him because of their concern for him. This is unusual for Paul. His usual custom was not accepting gifts or wages for his services. He preferred to work and earn his living. He saw in the gift of the Philippians what he called “fragrant aroma of an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God”. What he appreciates is their concern and thoughtfulness. He tells them that he knew what it meant to be content and to be in want. While the rest of the world

sought to be self-sufficient, Paul sought to be God-sufficient. Paul could face anything because he had Christ in every situation.

The person who walks with Christ can cope with anything. Learn to walk with Christ.

Mathew 22:1-14

The invitation of the Lord is to a joyful celebration, to a banquet, to a feast. It is to great joy that the Christian is invited. It is joy that he loses when he refuses the invitation.

Be joyful! Be optimistic! Be people of Hope!

Things that make us refuse the invitation are not bad in themselves. One man went to his estate another to business, etc. We just become too pre-occupied and lose touch with that which is lasting, that which is eternal. Our priorities get mixed up. Often we become so busy with the affairs of life that we forget life itself. Often, we also get so busy with the Lord's work that we forget the Lord of the work!

Stay focused! Embrace life in its fullness, with all its joys and limitations!

God's invitation is a call of Grace - a pure gift. Acceptance of this pure gift calls for certain responsibility. We cannot go on wearing the same garment that we were wearing before the call of Grace. We need a new garment - We are given a new garment in Baptism and reminded that we must bring this garment unstained into everlasting life!

Be clothed in a new purity, a new holiness, a new goodness.

Saint of the Day, October 11 - Saint John XXIII and 18 other saints are remembered this day

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was the firstborn son of a farming family in northern Italy. After his ordination in 1904, Angelo returned to Rome for canon law studies. He soon worked as his bishop's secretary, Church history teacher in the seminary, and as publisher of the diocesan paper. In 1921, he was made national director in Italy of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1925, he became a papal diplomat, serving first in Bulgaria, then in Turkey, and finally in France. With the help of Germany's ambassador to Turkey, Archbishop Roncalli helped save an estimated 24,000 Jewish people. Named a cardinal and appointed patriarch of Venice in 1953, he was finally a residential bishop. A month short of entering his 78th year, he was elected pope, taking the name John after his father and the two patrons of Rome's Cathedral.

His most famous encyclicals were *Mother and Teacher* (1961) and *Peace on Earth* (1963). Pope John XXIII enlarged the membership in the College of Cardinals and made it more international. He opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962 for the renewal of the Church. On his deathbed, he said: "It is not that the gospel has changed; it is that we have begun to understand it better. Those who have lived as long as I have...were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead." "Good Pope John" died on June 3, 1963. Saint John Paul II beatified him in 2000, and Pope Francis canonized him in 2014.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Gratitude is the beginning of humility because it recognizes that all we are and have are gifts from a loving and generous God.

(St. Francis de Sales)

