



Bible Study * Twenty-Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

**St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes**

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“He said to him, ‘My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?’ But he was reduced to silence.” Mat. 22:12

Reading I: Isaiah 25:6-10a

SAVE THE DATE! – DRESS TO IMPRESS!

These are the days of bold invitations. People will send notices of events and almost order you to save the date of the event. Some are so bold as to tell you what you should wear to the event. Some wedding invitations read: “*Formal attire only, no children please.*”

Even though these requests may burden the attendees, such requests come from hosts who want to brand their event with an exceptional quality or atmosphere. The premise of the invitation is that if you like me enough, you will do it. If you are curious enough, you will do whatever it takes and come.

God also invites us to His banquet, which is His presence for all eternity. He tells us to save the date of our arrival, even though we don’t actually know the date, or the hour. To get into His presence,



**How did you get in
here without a
wedding dress?**

we must wear the garment of good works. His message is to, “Save the date. Dress to impress.”

In the first reading, Isaiah describes a lavish banquet given when death is destroyed and sorrow is no more. It describes a prophetic victory banquet which depicts the blessings, happiness and contentment that the Messianic kingdom will bring. The banquet will take place on the Holy Mountain, Jerusalem (v. 6) where Jesus won the messianic victory for us on Calvary. Note that the Eucharist was instituted in Jerusalem and it is also where the Church began on Pentecost.

Isaiah predicts that In Jerusalem, God will remove the veil of oppression from all people. The physical death of the Messiah will destroy the spiritual death of all people (v. 8). This is God’s promise (vv. 8-9), not Isaiah’s. All people will recognize the true God who has brought them salvation. Verse 9 is reflective of Isaiah 30:18-19 that shows how anxious God is to be gracious to us. He tells us to save the date and rejoice on His return. On that day we should be adorned with virtuous deeds to impress our Host. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How do you respond to God’s invitation to you? What will you wear?

The Catholic Church Teaches: Jesus invites us into the Kingdom of God.

545 Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father’s boundless mercy for them and the vast “joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.” The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life “for the forgiveness of sins.”

546 Jesus’ invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching. Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough; deeds are required. The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? What use has he made of the talents he has received? Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to “know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.” For those who stay “outside,” everything remains enigmatic. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm#>

Reading II: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

SAVE THE DATE! DRESS TO IMPRESS!

St. Paul has no shame in his game. He marks the date of his deliverance with his lifestyle. He exhibits his wedding garment of good works and is waiting for the day when he enters God’s presence.

St. Paul thanks the Philippians for their financial help. In his entire ministry, he only accepted financial help from them. He has trained himself to accept the highs and lows of a life of ministry. He was often hungry (2 Cor. 11:2-29). Other times he had what he needed, which he called abundance (vv. 12-14). He now shows his wedding garment (v. 13), which is his complete trust in Christ for everything. This conduct is proof to the Philippians that by “sharing in his trouble,” they have also put on their wedding garments. He blesses them with God’s invitation to share in His riches and glory. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How do you respond to the generosity of others? Write a blessing for someone who has helped you.

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Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

SAVE THE DATE! – DRESS TO IMPRESS!

Weddings today cost tens of thousands of dollars. But there is one wedding trend that has increased in popularity. Rather than receiving ten toasters and eight blenders, newlyweds sometimes request that their guests donate to a charity chosen by the bride and groom. One couple's wedding presents established a fund for the homeless, another couple arranged for all the food left over from their reception to go to a non-profit food distribution center.

This new tradition celebrates the beginning of a new relationship based on love and commitment with an act of love and commitment to others. It also gives us the image of what Jesus meant by the wedding garment in the Parable of the Wedding Feast. Save the date, because we don't know the hour or the day. But don't forget our good works, which become our wedding garments. The purpose of our life on earth is to prepare our garments of love on earth to attend the heavenly banquet.

Jesus told three parables in this series with similar implications. The parable of the two sons implicates Israel's leaders (Matt. 21:28-32). The parable of the wicked tenant farmer reveals the guilt and complacency of the listeners of the parable (Matt. 21:33-46). This last parable, that is the broadest of the three, condemns the contempt with which all of Israel treated God's grace.

The religious leadership of Israel presumed that because they were God's Chosen people, they were guaranteed positions in the Messianic Kingdom. The parable was to show them that because of pride and vain glory, they were about to forfeit their birth right and would be thrown out of the banquet. They did not save the date and they did not have the proper clothes, which is a life of good works. The king represents God the Father. His son, the bridegroom, is the Messiah (See Matt. 9:15; 25:1). The wedding feast is the Messianic banquet that will take place on earth at the beginning of the kingdom (See Matt 8:11-12; 25:1; Ps. 132:15; Isa. 25:6-8). The servants, (Greek *doloi*) are God's prophets who include Jesus and John the Baptist. (Matt. 21: 34-46). They announced God's invitation to Israel, to which they did not overwhelmingly respond. Those invited showed more interest in their own possessions and activities than in the banquet (John 1:12). They disobeyed and dishonored the king. Completely rebuffed, the king took retribution for the murder of his servants and invites all that would come (vv. 6-10) to the banquet. The man without the wedding garment was not prepared (vv. 11-14). In that society, a wedding garment was a clean shirt. His act was also dishonorable and disobedient. He was bound and thrown out of the banquet. He might have saved the date, but he was not dressed to impress. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What does the clean garment represent? Why is proper attire required at all? Is a clean heart necessary to serve?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read Isaiah 25:6-9. Invite someone to lunch or coffee.

Tuesday

Read Philippians 4:1-14. Make a donation to the St. Vincent De Paul Society, or a food bank.

Wednesday

Read Matthew 21:28-32. Perform an act of kindness to a stranger.

Thursday

Pray for persecuted Christians in the Middle East and Africa.

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

BANQUET REFERENCES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament speaks of the messianic banquet—a banquet at the end of this age—at which the patriarchs and all the righteous will be guests, but from which the wicked will be excluded (Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29). The Book of Revelation concludes with all people invited to one or the other of the two banquets. At "the supper of the great God" (Rev 19:17), the scavenger birds are invited to devour the defeated kings of the earth and their armies; at "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9), Christ will have fellowship with the faithful.

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Resources: *Philippians*, Ivan Havener, O.S.B. ; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1165-1168; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2014*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 225- 228; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The Philanthropic Trends Digest 7:13 [June 1, 1990] <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic->

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017