28th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME- A: "ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE HEAVENLY BANQUET?": Is 25:6-10a; Phili 4:12-14, 19-20; Mat 22:1-14

A man received an invitation to a very important wedding. He was so excited that he dressed beautifully, drove to the place, and walked into the reception hall. But after a few minutes, the bride's father came to him and asked, "Sir, may I ask you something? Who invited you?" The man said, "I don't know… but there is food here, so I thought I should come!"

Sometimes we can be like that with God. **We want the blessings of God, but we forget the One who invited us.** We want the banquet, but we don't always want the relationship with the King.

Today Jesus gives us a beautiful and challenging message: **God has prepared a banquet, and He is inviting us. But the question is: Are we prepared for the banquet?**

In the first reading, Isaiah gives us a wonderful picture of God's kingdom. He speaks about a rich feast on the mountain of the Lord—a feast for **all peoples**. God promises to remove the veil, wipe away tears, destroy death, and bring His people into fullness of life. This is God's heart. **God is not trying to keep us away from Him. God is preparing a place for us.** Every Mass is already a foretaste of that heavenly banquet. We come to the Lord's table, receive His Word, receive His Body and Blood, and experience His mercy. The invitation is not only for perfect people. It is for sinners, for the broken, for the lonely, for those who have failed and for those who are searching. **The Church is not a museum for perfect people; but it is a hospital for sinners.** God says, "Come. My table is ready."

St. Paul tells the Philippians, **"I have learned to be content with whatever I have."** He knows abundance. He knows poverty. He knows success. He knows suffering. But he has discovered the secret: **"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."** Paul's strength did not come from comfortable circumstances. His strength came from **Christ**. This is an important message for us today. Some of us are carrying family problems, are worried about finances, are struggling with loneliness, illness, disappointment, or uncertainty about the future. Paul reminds us: **Our circumstances may change, but God's presence does not change.**

And he tells the Philippians that because they generously supported his mission, **God will supply their needs according to His glorious riches.** So let us be generous with God. When we help God's people and support the mission of the Church, we become part of God's work in the world.

Then Jesus tells us the parable of the wedding banquet. The king invites many people, but they make excuses. "I have bought a field." "I have bought five yokes of oxen." "I have married a wife." They were too busy for the banquet. And isn't that sometimes our problem? **God invites us, but we are too busy.** But eventually the king says, **"The feast is ready."**

And so, the invitation goes out to everyone. This tells us something beautiful: **God's invitation is wider than our judgment.** But then comes the shocking part. The king finds

a man without a wedding garment. Why? Because being invited is not enough. **We must also be prepared.** The wedding garment represents the life we live after accepting God's invitation.

Are we wearing the garment of **faith?** The garment of **love?** The garment of **forgiveness?** The garment of **humility?** The garment of **charity and compassion?** It is not enough to say, "I am Catholic." The question is: **Does my life look like Christ?**

God has prepared the banquet. **The invitation has already been given.** The question is not, *"Am I invited?"* **Yes, you are invited.** The question is: **"AM I PREPARED?"**

As this year gradually moves toward its end, let us ask ourselves: **Whom have I invited closer to God? Whom have I forgiven? Whom have I helped? Whom have I brought back to the Church? What kind of wedding garment am I wearing?** Remember this beautiful truth: **Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.** No matter what our past has been, God's invitation is still before us.

Let us come to His table with humble hearts. Let us remove the garment of pride, anger, hatred, selfishness and indifference, and put on the garment of Christ—**love, mercy, forgiveness and charity.** Then, when the King calls us to the eternal banquet, may He find us ready**.** We pray in this Mass that, may God give us the grace to keep our wedding garments pure, clean, immaculate and spotless so that we may be worthy and respond positively to His invitation to partake in the heavenly banquet. **Amen**