The Lord gives us a beautiful image in today's readings: a great feast prepared by God Himself. Isaiah speaks of the Lord preparing a rich banquet for His people, a feast of abundance and joy. The Gospel reveals the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven - He tells us - is like a wedding feast prepared by a king for his son. The invitation goes out. Everything is in order. The food is there. The celebration is about to begin. And yet, tragically, some of those who are invited refuse to come.

There is something very important about the urgency of this Gospel. Notice how the king does not send out an invitation for some far-distant day in the future. The feast is ready now. The servants go out and announce that everything has been prepared. The hour has come. And yet the invited guests are too wrapped-up in their own pursuits to be bothered. One goes to his farm. Another goes to his business. Others simply reject the invitation outright. They have other things to do. They have other priorities. They assume that there will always be another opportunity to respond.

That is one of the great dangers of the spiritual life; that we become so preoccupied with the things of this world, that we gradually lose sight of the fact that our life is moving toward eternity. There is always something else to accomplish, something else to purchase, something else to repair, something else to worry about, something else that seems more urgent. And because tomorrow seems so certain, we can postpone the things that matter most. But tomorrow is not promised to us.

The prudent Christian remembers this. We do not know when the Lord will call us from this life. We do not know the hour when we will stand before Him. We do not know whether we will have another year, another month, another week, or even another day. The invitation to the wedding feast is being extended to us now, and the wise Christian does not presume upon the future. He prepares in the present.

This is not a message meant to frighten us into some anxious obsession with death; rather, it is meant to teach us how to truly live. The uncertainty of this life should make us more faithful, not more

fearful. It should make us pray more sincerely. It should make us take the Sacraments more seriously. It should make us examine our consciences honestly. It should make us ask whether we are actually living as people who desire to spend eternity with God.

Because there is a great difference between knowing about God and actually living in relationship with Him.

Authentic prayer is at the heart of that relationship. Prayer is not simply repeating empty words because we feel an obligation to do so. Prayer is about coming before the Father with a desire to share our hearts with Him, and allow Him to speak back to us. It is bringing Him our fears, our sins, our gratitude, our suffering, and our hopes. It is allowing Him gradually to change the way we think - and thus - the way we live.

A Christian who never prays cannot expect his relationship with God to remain strong. Relationships require time. They require attention. They require honesty. And our relationship with God is no different. If

we continually tell ourselves that we will pray later, that we will become more serious about our faith later, that we will return to the Sacraments later, we may discover that the invitation extended to us has been revoked, and that the Master's servants have brought others in our place.

This is why the Sacraments are so important. Christ does not merely give us an invitation and then leave us to find our own way to the feast. He gives us His grace. He gives us the means by which He heals, strengthens, forgives, and sanctifies us. After Baptism, the greatest of these gifts is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

There may be some here who have been away from Confession for a long time. Perhaps you are carrying sins that you are ashamed to confess. Perhaps you have simply fallen out of the habit and have never found your way back. Perhaps you have convinced yourself that what happened was so grave that it puts you outside the range of God's forgiveness. I'm here to tell you today that nothing could be further from the truth. If any of this describes your situation, then please hear this Gospel as an invitation. The confessional is not a place where God

is waiting to condemn you. It is a place where Christ is waiting to heal you. The priest does not sit there as an enemy waiting to shame you. He sits there as a minister of the mercy of Christ - a brother who is equally in need of God's forgiveness. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not meant to keep you trapped in your past. It is one of the ways Christ sets you free from it.

Sin promises freedom, while only ever resulting in chains. Christ asks us to bring Him our sins so that He can give us true freedom. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by returning to Him in Confession. This is why we should never allow ourselves to become comfortable with long separation from the Sacraments. We should never tell ourselves that we will get serious about our spiritual life someday. We should never assume that there will always be more time.

The wedding feast of the Lamb is real. Heaven is real. Eternity is real. The invitation extended to us all is real. But the Gospel also reminds us that simply receiving an invitation is not the same thing as being ready for the feast. We are called not merely to accept the name

Christian, but to allow Christ to clothe us with a new life. Grace is meant to change us. Conversion is meant to be real. The Christian life is not simply about belonging to a Church on paper. It is about becoming holy.

That means going to Confession when we fall into serious sin. It means receiving the Eucharist worthily and with reverence. It means praying even when we do not feel like it. It means forgiving others, resisting temptation, obeying God when His will conflicts with our own. It means allowing Christ to become Lord not merely of one hour a week on Sunday, but of our entire life.

St. Paul gives us a beautiful confidence in the second reading. He tells us that he has learned to live in abundance and in need, in plenty and in hunger, because he knows that his strength comes from Christ. That is the freedom of the Christian who has learned to live for God rather than for the passing things of this world.

The Lord is our shepherd. He leads us. He restores us. Even when we walk through the darkest valley, we do not need to fear, because He

is with us. But a sheep must follow its shepherd. It must remain close to him. And so must we.

The Lord has prepared the feast. The table is ready. The invitation has been sent out. We do not know how much time remains before our earthly life comes to an end. Therefore, the wise Christian does not wait for some imaginary perfect moment to begin taking God seriously…the wise Christian begins now.

If your prayer life has grown cold, start praying again with renewed vigor. If you have neglected the Sacraments, return to them. If you have been away from Confession, come home. If there is serious sin in your life, do not labor under its weight…bring it to Christ. Let Him forgive you. Let Him heal you. Let Him restore you.

The invitation of the King is not merely an invitation to attend an event; it's an invitation to spend eternity with Him. The most important thing we can do in this uncertain life is to make certain that we are ready when the invitation becomes a summons. May we not be so distracted

by the things of this world that we fail to hear His voice when He calls. May we live faithfully, pray sincerely, frequent the Sacraments, seek forgiveness when we fall, and remain close to Christ until the day when He calls us home. Then, by His mercy, we will hear not merely the invitation, but the final welcome into the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!

There is something both beautiful and frightening about the Gospel today. The King has prepared a wedding feast for His Son. The table is set. The finest food and wine are ready. The doors are open, and the invitation has gone out. Yet some refuse to come. Others treat the invitation as though it were an inconvenience. The tragedy is not that the King failed to invite His people, but rather that they failed to prepare themselves for the invitation they had received.

This is the great drama of the Christian life. God has prepared a feast for us that exceeds anything this world can offer. Through Jesus Christ, He invites us to share in His own divine life. The prophet Isaiah describes this feast as the moment when God will destroy death forever and wipe away the tears from every face. This is the hope for which we were created. Heaven is not merely the end of our troubles. It is the fulfillment of our deepest longing, when we will see God face to face and possess Him forever. But we must never forget that an invitation is not the same thing as an arrival. The fact that God desires our salvation does not mean that we can remain indifferent to it.

One of the great dangers of the spiritual life is the temptation to postpone conversion. We tell ourselves that we will become more serious about prayer someday. We will go to Confession when life settles down. We will break that sinful habit when we feel stronger. We will forgive that person when our anger has cooled. We will put God first when we have more time. And so the years pass. Our intentions remain good, but our souls remain neglected. We behave as though we have an unlimited supply of time, as though we can choose the moment when God will call us to account. But the King does not promise us that kind of time. The invitation to salvation is offered today, and today is the only day over which we have any real control. We do not know when our earthly lives will end. We do not know when we will stand before Christ. We must not gamble our eternity on the assumption that there will always be another opportunity to repent.

We can belong to the Church outwardly while neglecting the conversion of our hearts. We can attend Mass, know our prayers, and consider ourselves religious, yet continue to harbor resentment, entertain

impurity, nourish pride, or excuse dishonesty. We can desire the consolation of God's promises while resisting the demands of His commandments. But the grace of God is not a decoration we put over an unchanged life. Grace is meant to transform us. The wedding garment reminds us that we must be clothed in a new life, a life shaped by repentance, charity, purity, humility, and obedience to Christ. We cannot make ourselves holy by our own strength, but we must cooperate with the grace that God freely gives us.

This brings us to two essential practices that must never become optional in the Christian life: regular Confession and regular prayer. Confession is not merely a place to visit when we have committed some terrible sin or when guilt becomes unbearable. It is the sacrament in which Christ meets us in our sinfulness and offers us His mercy. In Confession, we stop making excuses. We stop pretending that our sins are harmless. We allow the light of God's truth to expose what we have tried to hide, and we receive the grace to begin again. For those conscious of mortal sin, Confession is especially urgent, because mortal

sin destroys charity in the soul and deprives us of sanctifying grace. We must not presume upon God's mercy by deliberately remaining in that condition. For all of us, frequent and honest Confession is a powerful means of conversion. It helps us recognize our weaknesses, resist temptation, repair what we have damaged, and prepare our souls to meet the Lord. A person who regularly examines his conscience and humbly confesses his sins is not wasting time dwelling on failure. He is preparing for eternity.

Prayer is equally necessary, because we cannot love someone with whom we refuse to spend time. Imagine a marriage in which husband and wife never speak to one another, never listen, and never make time to be together. Even if they continue living under the same roof, their relationship will slowly grow cold. Something similar happens to the soul when prayer disappears. We may still identify ourselves as Catholics, but without prayer our awareness of God's presence weakens. The voice of the world grows louder, our consciences become less sensitive, and our own desires begin to appear more important than the

will of God. Daily prayer restores the proper order of our lives. It teaches us to listen before we act, to seek God's will before our own, and to remember that our lives belong to Him. We need time each day for Scripture, for silence, for the Rosary or other traditional prayers, and for an honest examination of our conduct. We need to bring our failures, our fears, our families, and our decisions before the Lord. Prayer does not merely help us feel closer to God. Properly lived, it prepares us to obey Him.

Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading that he has learned to live amid both abundance and want, because his strength comes from Christ. This is the freedom of a soul that has learned to put God first. The person who lives only for earthly comforts will always be anxious about losing them. The person who lives only for human approval will always be afraid of rejection. The person who lives only for personal pleasure will never be satisfied for long. But the person who lives for Christ is gradually freed from these chains. Such a person can use the gifts of this world with gratitude without making them into gods. He can

endure suffering without surrendering hope. He can face the future without pretending to control it. This is the kind of spiritual freedom that prepares us for the wedding feast. It comes not from a single dramatic decision, but from a thousand daily acts of faithfulness: a temptation resisted, a resentment surrendered, a prayer offered when we are tired, a sin confessed when we would rather hide it, and a duty fulfilled when no one is watching.

My brothers and sisters, every Mass gives us a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb. Here Christ feeds His people with His Word and gives Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. We approach the altar because He has invited us, not because we have made ourselves worthy by our own efforts. Yet we must approach with faith, repentance, and reverence, allowing His grace to prepare us for the eternal banquet. The King has been generous beyond measure. He has given us His Son. He has given us His Church, His sacraments, His Word, and the promise of eternal life. The question is whether we are responding to that generosity with lives that are being transformed by His grace.

Let us not wait for a tragedy to teach us the value of repentance. Let us not wait for old age to teach us the value of prayer. Let us not wait until death approaches to begin preparing for eternity. Today, make a firm examination of conscience. If you are conscious of mortal sin, seek the sacrament of Confession as soon as possible, and do not receive Holy Communion until you have been sacramentally reconciled, except as provided by the Church's teaching. If you have neglected prayer, begin again today. If there is someone you need to forgive, begin the difficult work of forgiveness. If there is a sinful habit you have been excusing, stop making peace with what separates you from God. We do not know the hour of the King's summons, but we know the One who is calling us, and we know the way He has given us to prepare.

The feast is prepared. The invitation has been extended. The mercy of God is still being offered. Let us therefore live as people who truly believe that eternity is real, that our choices matter, and that the love of God deserves our whole heart. May we be found not merely among those who have heard the invitation, but among those who have prepared

themselves to receive it. And when the King comes to call us into the eternal wedding feast of His Son, may He find us clothed in the grace of Christ, strengthened by the sacraments, faithful in prayer, and ready to enter into the joy that will never end.