

Homily for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Times

October 14-15, 2017

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10A; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22:1-14

Preacher: Giovina Caroscio

In today's first reading, two images—one tender and one extravagant—seize my attention. With gentleness and love Isaiah proclaims, “The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face.” These words bring comfort as we grapple with the Las Vegas tragedy of indiscriminate killing. In these past few months we have witnessed great devastation of life and of God's creation through hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fires, ongoing terrorist attacks and wars in the Middle East and Africa. How do we find hope in the midst of this overwhelming display of death?

Vaclav Havel, the Czech poet and statesman, spoke about hope as “an orientation of the heart [that]... transcends the world, that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons...It is hope, above all,” he states, “that gives us strength to live and to continually try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do, here and now. In the face of this absurdity, life is too precious a thing to permit its devaluation by living pointlessly, emptily, without meaning, without love, and, finally, without hope.”

For me, hope is the virtue of those who believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Reflecting on Isaiah's second image we hear, “On this mountain...” our Providential God lavishly provides a rich feast of food and drink for everyone. In the Scriptures, God often reveals God's-self on mountains— on Mt. Sinai, Mt. Tabor, Mt. of Olives. Here God resides and is ever present—another reason for us to hope.

The Gospel speaks of a wedding feast that the king is providing for his son. Matthew addresses this parable directly to the Jewish leaders. As with all parables there is symbolism here. Scripture commentators note that the king represents God, the son is Jesus. Just as the invitees in the parable offer excuses for not attending the wedding feast, we might ask ourselves if we accept God's invitation to join with his Son in building the reign of God.

Many hearers of this Gospel question why the poor man from the byway is kicked out for not having a wedding garment. Again the allegorical nature of the passage must be understood. One commentator suggests that the wedding garment may point to how people live their faith and participate in works of mercy.

At our baptism, we were “clothed in Christ.” Do we still wear that garment everyday in our interactions with others, in our response to pain or suffering, in our actions on behalf of justice? After all, as baptized Christians, aren’t we called to be the God of tender compassion today?

And how might we be messengers of hope? Here is one way we can actively live out today’s Gospel. Today is Bread For The World Sunday. Bread For The World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad by 2030—which is doable! Right now the executive and legislative branches of our government are making budgetary decisions that target major reductions in funding for time-proven programs that effectively alleviate hunger here in the United States and abroad.

In the next few months we have an opportunity to respond to today’s “Gospel invitation to take part in the banquet of God’s mercy and abundance that is ours through Jesus Christ” (BFW Sunday 2017). Let’s contact our elected representatives and urge them not to make drastic cuts to programs that help vulnerable hungry people, especially children. Helpful information is available from Bread For The World. (bread.org is a simple enough website to remember, isn’t it?) I challenge you and myself to don our baptismal garments, involve our friends and parish community and act on behalf of people who are hungry, for in doing so we too will wipe away many tears.

Finally, are you thinking to yourself that your voice doesn’t matter? Do you think it is futile to make calls given the current executive and legislative wrangling? If so, let me recall for you the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, “Glory be to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or ever imagine.” Or if you prefer a more modern motto, consider Nike’s and, “*Just do it!*”