

Homily for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 10-11, 2020

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew 11:1-14

Preacher: Irene Goodwin

Mask required! This may be one of the few clothing restrictions we hear of today. Very rarely do we even hear that a tie and coat are required. Occasionally, in a beach town you will read shirt and shoes required. People attend weddings dressed from very casual to very fancy. So we are bewildered by a king who will throw out guests for the way they are dressed.

Weddings and feasting are common themes in the Hebrew Scriptures as a metaphor for the heavenly banquet. The metaphor suggests God's care for all and participation in God's realm both now and at the end of time. In today's reading, Isaiah writes of such a banquet and he tells of a day when God will destroy the veil, all that separates people.

Those who first heard our Gospel parable understood the idea of a great wedding feast as an image of the heavenly banquet. However, this parable has a twist. While all are invited, some refused the invitation. Others happily attended but in the end they were turned away because they did not have the proper wedding garment. What is this wedding garment? Some would tell us that the wedding garment is people's good works. In Colossians 3:12 Paul writes: "Put on as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Perhaps these are the requirements for one to be welcomed into God's realm. Or, is this Jesus' command for making God's reign present in our midst? This may be more difficult than weekly Mass and daily prayers.

Some years ago when I worked at an inner-city parish, my children became friends with parishioners. Some weekends they would stay overnight at a family's home. One weekend we invited the children to our home. On Saturday my husband and I were signed up to help at a sports booster's booth at our local carnival. We brought the kids and gave them a little money for the rides. At one

point these three black and two white children approached our booth. As I went to see what they needed, the other man in our booth moved the cash box.

We were at a carnival where all kinds of people approached this booth, but he moved the cash when these beautiful children approached. As I reflect on this story today, it is not so much to condemn that man as to ask myself when have I expressed this kind of racism? I am sure in my ignorance I have probably done something similar. How do I prejudge someone by the color of their skin, the way they look or the clothes they wear? Judging them by how they look and not by their love. There are many ways we prejudge others. It may be by the color of a person's skin, their gender, sexual orientation, the part of the country they reside in or even the side of the Genesee River they live on.

We need to be careful of how we perceive others. All are invited to God's glorious banquet; however, in order to be welcomed at the banquet we need to work to destroy the veil that veils all people. Is that not what Jesus came to do and gave us the command to follow him? We work to destroy all that keeps people separate and unequal. We need to end divisions of all kinds but don't often know how to begin. Perhaps we begin by putting on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. This may seem overly simple and ineffective. However, if many of us took each of these traits and worked to make them habits, they would become part of our character and change would happen. Is this not critical in today's environment?

In the midst of all the chaos and divisions in our country, we do hear of wonderful examples of this. It may be when a small boy waited every day to give bottles of water to refuse collectors, or when a Kansas farmer sent one mask to N.Y. which caused a N.Y. company to give away \$75,000 worth of masks. It happened when a famous chef enabled thousands of meals to be delivered to essential workers. It continues when health care professionals leave their homes and put their lives at risk to help in hospitals and when all our essential workers daily do the same. Every day we encounter people whose wedding garment shines through.

.