

Homily for the 28th Sunday of the Year

“Food glorious food, we’re anxious to try it,” so the song goes in the musical *Oliver*, and food glorious food is part of Isaiah’s wonderful vision in today’s first reading. ‘On this mountain the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines.’ Many people hearing Isaiah at the time could well have hoped that this were true rather than a vision, because they were not enjoying the best of times. This is true for many people today, particularly in places like Yemen and South Sudan where the people are on the brink of starvation. How fitting that the World Food Programme should win the Nobel prize for peace this week for its efforts to combat hunger and improve conditions for peace in conflict areas. But Isaiah’s vision includes more than a banquet, it includes the wiping away of tears, the taking away of shame and the destruction of even death itself by the God in whom the people hoped. We might think of those known and unknown to us who are filled with sorrow and grief, or wracked with shame, or at the point of death. And not just think of them but pray for them, sending them loving kindness, and thereby giving them hope.

Food is also central to the gospel as Jesus tells the chief priests and the elders that the kingdom of heaven is like a wedding feast a king prepared for his son. As the story unfolds we realise that those originally invited declined to come, busy about other things which they thought were more important and mistreating the king’s servants when they told them the feast was ready. So the king tells his servants to go into the roads and round up anyone they found, good and bad alike, until the wedding hall was full. They must have gazed in amazement at the banquet so unexpectedly put before them. It was far more than they could have hoped for. This must have raised serious questions for the chief priests and the elders, reminding them of last week’s story of the tenant’s who refused to give the landowner the produce of the vineyard, and what happened to them, especially when they heard the last sentence of today’s passage, “many are called but few are chosen.”

But before that sentence there is a second story, about the person not wearing a wedding garment. Many would think that what happened to him was harsh. What if he was homeless, impoverished, unable to get hold of the right clothes? If that was the case what happened was unjust. But what if a wedding garment was offered at the door to everyone as a condition of entry and he deliberately refused to wear it? This could suggest a lack of readiness, or even a refusal to do God’s will. If this was the case can doing God’s will include wearing the right clothes? St Paul suggests so in his letter to the Colossians: ‘You are God’s chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience...Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.’ Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, love, qualities of kingdom people, which lived out can bring about transformation for the better in ourselves, in others, indeed in our world.

Bidding Prayers for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want. With these hope filled words of the psalm in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

We pray for those loved ones who serve a hidden sentence as a result of the shame associated with having a family member imprisoned. In times of darkness we pray they are able go beyond the bonds of societal stigma and maintain positive relationships with their loved ones.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who work throughout the criminal justice system. May they continue to walk the extra mile in their work towards creating a safer society and promote justice and mercy on the road to rehabilitation.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for the victims of crime: May they be supported to go beyond their victimhood and find comfort in God's love. Teach us to be mindful of the impact of our actions on others. Lead us and heal us in your journey to new life and hope.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who are prisoners. Through reflection and understanding, may they be able to go beyond their sentence and see hope for a future without crime. Let us follow Christ's message and reach out so that his presence may be known to those who seek him.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic and Patricia Biggs, Gerard Higgins, Rose Dydyk, Jim Kehoe, Henry Spikker, Elizabeth Alice Burns, Margaret Mary Shea and Thomas Boyle whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God we have brought before you in our prayers all those who are affected by custodial sentences. As we ask you to be with them encourage us to support them by our prayers and our presence.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen