

## TWENTY-EIGHT SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

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

*Excerpts from Pope Francis – Angelus - 15 Oct 2023*

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Brother and sisters, I watched the movie on Joan of Arc last Monday with my mom. I'm not going to talk about the whole story, but the important part for today is that Joan of Arc helped leading the French army to a crucial victory and helping crown King Charles VII during the Hundred Years' War. Well, we know that Kings in the past are not like today's. I don't see King Charles of England going out as a military leader.

Today's Gospel talks about a king who prepares a wedding banquet for his son. Even though he is a powerful man, he is above all a generous father, who invites others to share in his joy. In particular, he reveals the goodness of his heart in the fact that he does not force anyone, but invites everyone, even though this way exposes him to the possibility of rejection.

We notice that he prepares a banquet, *freely* offering an opportunity for an encounter, an opportunity for a feast. This is what God prepares for us: a banquet, to be in communion with him and among ourselves. And we, all of us, are therefore God's invited guests. But a wedding banquet requires time and commitment on our part: it requires a "yes": to go, to go to the Lord's invitation. He invites, but he leaves us free. This is the type of relationship that God the Father offers us: he calls us to stay with him, leaving us the possibility to accept or not accept [the invitation]. He does not propose to us a relationship of subjection, but rather of fatherhood and sonship, which is necessarily conditioned by our free consent. God is very respectful regarding freedom; *very* respectful.

Saint Augustine uses a very beautiful expression in this regard, saying: "He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent" (Sermon 169, 13). And certainly not because he does not have the capacity to do so — God is all-powerful! — but because, being love, he respects our freedom fully. God proposes he does not impose. Never. In the parable: the king "sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they *would not come*".

Here is the drama of the story: the "no" to God. But why do people refuse his invitation? Was it perhaps an unpleasant invitation? No, and yet — the Gospel says — "they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business". They did not care, because they were thinking of their own affairs. And that king, who is a father, God, what does he do? He does not give up; he continues to invite. He even extends the invitation, until he finds someone who accepts it, among the poor. Among those who know they have little, many come, until they fill the hall.

Brothers and sisters, how many times do we fail to heed God's invitation, because we are absorbed on our own affairs! Often, we struggle to have *free* time, but today Jesus invites us to find the time that *frees*: the time to dedicate to God, that lightens and heals our hearts, that increases peace, confidence and joy in us, that saves us from evil, loneliness and loss of meaning.

It is worth it, because it is good to be with the Lord, to make room for him. Where? At Mass, in listening to the Word, in prayer and also in charity, because by helping those who are weak or poor, by spending time with those who are lonely, by listening to those who ask for attention, by consoling those who suffer, one is with the Lord, who is present in those in need.

However, many think that these things are a “waste of time”, and so they lock themselves away in their private world; and it is sad. Yes, this creates sadness. How many sad hearts there are! The reason is, because they are closed.

How do I respond to God's invitations?

What space do I give him in my days?

Does the quality of my life depend on my affairs and my free time, or on love for the Lord and for my brothers and sisters, especially those most in need?

In this month of Mary, may she who with her “yes” made room for God, help us not to be deaf to his invitations.