28th Sunday

The readings today invite us to imagine salvation not as a prize handed out to a few, but as a wedding feast God longs to share with his faithful. The insightful prophet Isaiah sees the Lord preparing a banquet for his people, a feast where death is destroyed and every tear is wiped away. Sounds like heaven! In the Gospel, Jesus, in the parable, tells of a king who prepares a wedding feast for his son and sends servants to invite the guests. But the first guests refuse. They have other things to do: a field to tend, a business matter. These are not evil things in themselves. But the danger is that good things can quietly take the place of the best thing or the greatest good. So the king sends his servants out again, this time to the crossroads, to invite everyone they find—good and bad alike. The hall is filled with people who might never have expected to be invited. This is actual grace at work. God wants all to be saved but not all want to be saved. God calls us in our need, our confusion, even our sin, for nobody is a hopeless case. The Church being apostolic (being sent) meets people with compassion and proclaims the Gospel of Mercy that results in a conversion – metanoia – a change in direction, a change in our lives. Then, in coming to Mother Church in receiving baptism, or the other sacraments, we are clothed with sanctifying grace, which is our wedding garment. Note that the story ends with the king who sees one guest without a wedding garment who is quickly dispatched. A stark reminder that although God is easy to please he is hard to satisfy. We cannot be saved without divine grace and grace must be freely sought. This one sought not the grace, thus the absence of the garment.

With only ten percent of Catholics attending Sunday Mass, we can say that today most people though invited fail in their obligation to attend his Sacrifice, which if wilful results in mortal sin, and the loss of sanctifying grace, our wedding garment. Most people have become like those invited in the parable, lazy and indifferent, they are too busy to come Sunday Mass. In our secular culture to need to make God a priority, which is only one hour ought of 168 hours in the week. Everyone's daily life is filled with a set of priorities. Sport, entertainment and work should not take the place of our highest good, who is God. Sadly often this is one of the most common ways to drift away from God.

One way we can prevent this from happening is to insert a buffer of prayer in our daily routine. If we pray *daily* then Mass on Sunday becomes a focal point for the week, a priority of desire. During October we give priority to the Rosary which is a staple prayer for our spiritual well being that embraces the three elements of head, heart and hands. Words said, thoughts gathered while hands finger the beads. Also, this week the Church's liturgy presents us with some heavy weights in prayer. Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint Ignatius of Loyola who were giant figures of the 16th-century Counter-Reformation and who revolutionized how we pray and our interior life. While they approached spirituality through different lenses—Teresa through Carmelite contemplation and Ignatius through structured discernment—both agreed that prayer is an intimate and transformative friendship with Jesus Christ. When we pray the Rosary, we are invited to move past a 'rote saying of words' and enter into deep mental meditation using the wisdom of these two masters of mental prayer. St. Teresa famously defined prayer as *"nothing more than spending a long time alone with the one I know loves me"*. She argued that the Rosary is meant to be a vehicle for mental prayer, which she broke down into three simple steps: Read: Begin each mystery of the Rosary by anchoring your mind in the Word of God, scripture, or a sacred image. Reflect: Do not just pass over the mystery. Think deeply about it. Ask yourself: *What does this reveal about Jesus? How does this fit into my life?* Resolve: Every meditation must end with a practical, concrete decision for that day. For example, the Scourging helps me to more patient with physical discomfort and pain. St. Ignatius, on the other hand, grasped meditation differently in his book *Spiritual Exercises*. When applied to the Rosary, Ignatian prayer asks you to place yourself in the scene: smell the dust of the road to Calvary; hear the whispers of the shepherds at Bethlehem. Then engage with the mystery. Speak to Jesus or Mary face-to-face as one friend speaks to another. Ask them how to draw some insights from these mysteries into your life which results in clear resolutions.

So in October, the month of the Rosary, let us be compliant with the requests of Our Mother in heaven and pray the Rosary each day, in some way, walking or kneeling, so that we keep focus on God's plan for us and obtain those graces that we need. Remember the family that prays together, stays together.