

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – A

The gospel reading is an allegorical parable i.e. the king is God; the wedding feast. the happiness of the messianic age; the king's son, the Messiah; those sent with invitations, the prophets and apostles; the invited who ignore them, the Jews; those called from the street; the sinners and the gentiles; the burning of the city, the destruction of Jerusalem. The gospel reading continues with the theme of a feast, a wedding feast, reflecting the happiness of the messianic age. Those initially invited prove themselves unworthy and those thought to be outsiders and foreigners are invited in their place, but each one must wear a garment of faith. The first reading tells of the wonderful banquet which God will prepare on his holy mountain. The second reading Paul says 'in every way now I have mastered the secret of all conditions' and he thanks the Philippians for sharing with him his hardships.

The **First Reading** comes from the prophet Isaiah, the first part of the book, chs.1-39. Isaiah was born about 765 BC and received his prophetic vocation while in the Temple in Jerusalem. His mission was to proclaim the fall of Israel and Judah as punishment for the nation's infidelity. He exercised his ministry for forty years and proclaimed his teaching in four distinct periods. It seems Isaiah finished his teaching by 700, after which date we know nothing of the prophet. There is a tradition that his life ended in martyrdom. His writings show Isaiah to be a poet of genius. The revelation of the transcendence of God and of human unworthiness he received in the Temple at the time of his call left a lasting mark on the prophet. For Isaiah God is an awesome God, a God who is Holy, Strong, the Mighty One, the King, we are his creatures defiled by sin for which God demands reparation insisting on just living among his people and sincerity in divine worship. Isaiah is the prophet of faith, he insists the people should trust in God in times of national crisis, by this alone will salvation be attained. Isaiah's hope is that a remnant of the people will recognise the Messiah for its King. This Messiah is to be a descendant of David. A prophet of considerable standing, Isaiah gathered round him a school of disciples who preserved his teaching.

The reading, 25.6-10, comes from the section headed Apocalypse which means a revelation imparted by God of events hidden in the future. The reading is looking beyond immediate events to God's judgement day. The reading begins with the words, 'On this mountain....' for Israel the mountain is where God dwells and it is here God is preparing a banquet, and the important words for us are, 'for all peoples.' Isaiah is teaching about all the peoples of the world, as earlier he writes, 'It will happen in those final days that the mountain of Yahweh's house will rise higher than the mountains....then all the nations will stream to it....' The banquet is of succulent food and fine wines. We are told further that on this mountain God has destroyed death forever removing 'the veil' and 'the pall enveloping all nations' that is a obstacle or something unbecoming. The power of God is revealed for he speaks and every tear is wiped away, their shame is taken away. The reading ends teaching us that it is in this God we can place our hope.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 22 is well known. The first line, 'The Lord is my shepherd' is an act of faith which is developed through the poem. The psalm illustrates God's care as a shepherd for the upright and in verse three God's care is shown as the host at the messianic banquet, 'You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies' reflecting on the first reading. The psalm ends on a confident note, 'I will make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.'

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Philippi, one of the principal cities of Macedonia, had been evangelized by Paul in 50 A.D. on his second missionary journey. Paul is now on his third missionary journey and is imprisoned in Ephesus, the capital of Roman Asia. He hopes to revisit the Church at Philippi and while in prison he writes to them a friendly letter, giving some news to his converts there. He warns them to 'Beware of evil workmen!' who will destroy the unity of love and joy which he so much desires for them based on humility, the humility of Christ and to that end he gives the Philippians a poem on the humility of the Messiah. This poem may or may not be from Paul's pen, but it gives witness to early Christian understanding of the nature of Christ.

The reading, 4.12-14,19-20, has Paul telling us that he has been through a whole gamut of experiences 'I have mastered the secret of all conditions....There is nothing cannot do in the One who strengthens me' He expresses his gratitude for God's help and to the Philippians for sharing in his hardships. He concludes with a prayer for the Philippians that, 'My God will fulfil all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. And so glory be to God our Father, for ever and ever. Amen.