

A Reflection Matthew 22:1-14

- Do you realize how much God loves you? Do you realize how precious you are in God's eyes? Do you know that God has invited each one of us to be in a loving relationship with Him? Do you know God waits for us to respond to this invitation?
- These are the questions to which this week's scripture readings provide answers.
- Our first two readings today combine to tell us God loves us fiercely. He is close by and cares for us. They also tell us that God's love for us is unending, it spans our days here on earth and our eternal life in heaven.
- In our second reading St. Paul speaks to us about God's love for us here and now. Paul tells us: "*My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*" And Paul reminds us further: "*I can do all things in him who strengthens me.*"
- Simply put, everything we need to journey through this life will be provided by God. Because we are precious to Him. Sometimes we don't realize this because we confuse "what we need" with "what we want". And the two can be drastically different.
- We *need* the basics: food, shelter, love of others, work to do, and of course God's presence. Beyond that are just "wants". Paul reminds us we can face all the joys, sorrows and challenges in life because God provides for our needs – here and now!
- In our first reading. The prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of what God has in store for us in eternity. Isaiah describes eternal life with God as a "rich feast" of all good things. People living in peace with each other.... and we will see our God without the veil of this earthly world.

- God loves us; each one of us is precious to God. No one is too small; no one is unimportant. Each one of us is invited to this loving relationship with God.
- But like all invitations a response is required. And today's Gospel reading speaks to this idea of invitation and response.
- At various times in our lives we receive invitations.
- Some invitations are short term in nature. We can be invited out to dinner, to a party, to a holiday or family gathering.
- Some invitations are long term in nature and have far reaching effects. We can be invited to accept a new job; to live in a new place; we can even be invited to marry and spend our lives with someone special.
- Our responses to invitations fall into several categories.
- There is the "I'm not going, no way, no how" response. Here we either totally dread or are totally disinterested with what is being offered.
- There is the "I really don't want to do this but I'm obligated to accept" response. Here you accept the invitation but your heart is not there.
- Next there is the "Gee, I'd love to but...(and you can fill in your own excuse here)" response.
- We see each of these types of responses in the parable Jesus tells to the corrupt Jewish leaders of His day. And Jesus point of the parable? He is telling those Jewish leaders that in varying ways they are rejecting God's invitation to a loving relationship. And so that invitation will be taken away from them and extended to other people.
- People whose response will be one of great joy, enthusiasm and thankfulness. People who understand that the response God requires to His invitation, the "wedding garment God expects us to wear" is a heart

that burns with desire to love and serve God; a heart that burns with a desire to love and serve others.

- So the challenge for each of us today is to choose which response we will make to God's invitation.
- Will we totally reject the invitation?
- Will we accept out of a sense of obligation? Habit? But not really feel that zeal for the invitation? Just go through the motions?
- Will the invitation be attractive to us but instead we give priority to something else (careers? Possessions?)
- Or will we go "all in" with genuine enthusiasm? Make following Jesus a top priority in our lives.
- Thankfully, the Lord invites us to this love filled relationship again today. And we have yet another opportunity to accept the invitation and be His eyes and ears, His hands and heart in this world.