

HOMILY for 28th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's 1st Reading & Gospel tell us about a huge banquet that the Lord has prepared for us faithful Christians in Heaven. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this favorite cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Three men died & went to Heaven. Upon their arrival, St. Peter asked the first if he had been faithful to his wife. The man admitted to two affairs during his marriage. St. Peter told him that he could receive only a compact car to drive in Heaven...

Then, St. Peter asked the second man if he had been faithful his wife, the man admitted to one affair. St. Peter told him he would be given a midsize car to drive in Heaven...

The third man was asked about his faithfulness, & he told St. Peter he had been true to his wife until the day he died. St. Peter praised him & gave him the luxury car...

A week later the three men were driving around in Heaven; & they all stopped at a red light. The men in the compact & midsize cars turned to see the man in the luxury car crying. The asked him what could be the matter – after all, he was driving a luxury car.

"I just passed my wife," he told them. "She was on a skateboard!"

Anyhow, Mt. Everest is the highest & the most famous mountain in the world. It stand at twenty-nine thousand feet in the Himalayas on the border of Nepal & China. Every year thousands of people from all over the world would flock to Mt. Everest trying to climb it & conquer it by getting to its peak. Along the way, participants would have to endure all sorts of hardships & get tested in every possible way. Some would have to give up halfway through the rugged journey while others might have lost their lives on the way to the top. We probably wonder why anyone in their right mind would want to do such a thing to begin with. Over a decade ago, one of my former parishioners from IHM Parish named Bill Barkeley, who happened to lose his eyesight in his late 40's, wanted to take on the challenge of Mt. Everest & was able to complete his amazing mission before coming home to talk about his surviving story. For him & other Everest climbers, it is all about trying to see if they could conquer the toughest test of all by completing the long, challenging journey & making it to the top.

Similarly, the Lord wants to use the mountain of God to invite the whole world to climb & test every human being for their resolve & faithfulness. Only the ones who are resilient & faithful to the Lord would be able to climb the mountain of God & conquer it. Those victors are called saints & holy souls. For they have completed the holy mountain expedition & made it through the Gate of Heaven.

As you recall, mountain is the highest point on earth & typically represents the dwelling place of God. If desert is the place where the Devil lives & tests people in the Bible, mountain is the place where God resides & watches over the whole Creation. In other words, desert is considered to be Hell or Purgatory while mountain is Heaven. In fact, this Sunday's First Reading sheds some light on that topic & explains more about it as following, "On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food & choice wines, juicy rich food & pure choice wines. On this mountain, He will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; He will destroy death forever. He will wipe away the tears from all faces." So, on the mountain of God, the Lord will put an end to death & wipe away the tears from all faces. There will be only the happy & eternal life for the holy & faithful souls to enjoy. But, that is not all. The Lord will also put out a big feast, a huge banquet with

rich food & choice wines for them to celebrate. That is why the mountain of God or Heaven is where every holy soul would want to end up after this life.

In case we have not heard about the big feast or received the invitation to the Heavenly banquet yet, this Sunday's Gospel wants to tell us a little more about it as following, "The Kingdom of God may be likened to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the wedding, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying: 'Tell those who were invited; see, I have my dinner prepared! My bullocks & corn-fed cattle are killed; everything is ready. Come to the feast.' Some ignored the invitation & went their way; one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, insult them, & killed them... Then, [the king] he said to his servants: 'The banquet is ready; but those who were invited were unfit to come. That is why you must go out into the byroads & invite to the wedding anyone you come upon.'" Evidently, the king has sent out lots of servants to invite his guest to the wedding banquet; but they all have ignored the invitation & done their own things. The king finally had to extend his invitation to everyone he could find to be a part of the Heavenly banquet celebration. That is why god wants people of every race, culture, tradition, religion, & background to dream about Heaven & work hard toward it.

However, Heaven does have its admission standards. Here is how today's Gospel describes those standards for us, "...When the King came in to meet the guests, he caught sight of a man not properly dressed for a wedding feast. 'My friend,' he said, 'how is it you came in here not properly dressed?' The man had nothing to say. The king then said to the attendants, 'bind him hand & foot; & throw him out into the night to wail & grind his teeth.'" As you can see, without proper garments & requirements, people can not be a part of the Heavenly banquet celebration. That is why the whole idea of "being born again Christians" or "being saved by God's grace without doing any Christian work" does not pan out with today's Gospel as some Christians might think. That is why we Catholics believe that we must follow a life of virtues & avoid sins if we want to get to Heaven after this life. That holy & virtuous life is the proper garment that would help us get ready for Heaven & be able enjoy the eternal life.

My dear brothers & sisters, God the Father has prepared a huge Heavenly banquet for His Son Jesus; & we are all invited. We should RSVP on our attendance at that banquet & make it our top priority to get there. More importantly, we need to prepare our proper garments for the banquet so that we will be ready to meet God the Father, Jesus, & all the Heavenly hosts after this life. What a joyful day it would be for us after our long, rough journey of faith on earth!