

## **28TH SUND. ORD. (A) BEHOLD THIS IS OUR GOD**

Behold this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. Why was it that God had been awaited to save the people? Because as the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want". St. Paul also told the Philippians, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me".

There is an expression of hope and confidence that God would save His people. He revives the soul; He guides along the right path; in the valley of the shadow of death, there is no fear of evil, because He is there with His crook and His staff to comfort. Goodness and mercy shall follow the one who waits for the Lord all the days of his life.

The Lord God has promised to remove sadness from His people and feed them with rich food. He was going to have a feast for His people. This feast is the feast of salvation. Death would be no more and there would be no shedding of tears.

This feast was at first for the Jews but it was rejected, and it is now for all peoples, as it is explained by Jesus in the parable He narrated. Everything was ready and for free, but those invited did not only refused to attend but maltreated the messengers, the prophets. Since the party should go on by all means, new messengers are sent, the apostles; everybody is called to enjoy.

Do I have confidence in God that in Him I can do all things, and that He can provide for all that I need? Am I waiting for the Lord to rejoice in His salvation? Have I been invited to experience this banquet? Yes, I have been invited and given a special garment when I was baptized. It is a garment of righteousness which I should wear to meet the Bridegroom with His angels. "The angel said, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb," (Rev.19:9). But am I ready to honour the invitation or am I one of those who have refused to honour it?

There is one sure truth that the kingdom of God will never be empty. If I refuse to search for it or accept to be part of it, there are many people who are willing to leave everything behind and earn it. From many

parables narrated by Jesus in connection with the kingdom, those the world frown upon are those with open heart to receive God's word.

There is no back door to the kingdom, and one cannot enter with any kind of disposition, as the one who was not properly dressed was thrown out. This means not all who have been called will be chosen for eternal life, as Jesus warns. One has to accept the invitation and go through the narrow door. We are to live a life worthy of the invitation we have received. St. Paul told the Ephesians, "I urge you, then - I who am a prisoner because I serve the Lord: live a life that measures up to the standard God set when He called you," (Eph. 4:1). Those who accept the invitation are given the strength to persevere as St. Paul is telling us today.

Why are many people not ready to honour the invitation? It is because we are yet to know the God who can save us; yet to know that He can wipe away tears from our eyes; that He can offer us all our hearts' desires; that He can lay a table even before our enemies.

The Lord invites us to wear our dress of prayer and fasting, faithfulness to His word, and truth.

**27TH SUND. ORD. (A)**

## THINK ABOUT WHAT IS EXCELLENT AND WORTHY OF PRAISE

When we get up every morning, no matter who we are, we have some sorts of anxieties. Parents think about what their children will eat, and meet their other expenses. Children think about how to pass their exams. Workers think about how the day's activities will go; while business men and women are thinking about how business will flourish, and how stocks will favour them. Retirees also think about how to spend the day without becoming bored.

The Christians in Philippi had similar anxieties, so St. Paul was telling them not to worry and be anxious about anything but to pray, and God would provide their needs and grant them peace. They were to focus their attention on what is excellent and worthy of praise. Their attention should be on good life; whatever is true, honourable, just and pure.

The Lord is disappointed in His vineyard (which represents the house of Israel) because it failed to produce fruit despite all the hard work. This means that the Israelites failed to live according to the statutes of the Lord. They did not think about what was pure, honourable, excellent and worthy of praise. They followed what was dishonourable. They failed to live a good exemplary life.

Jesus' parable of the vineyard is similar to the one in the first reading. The workers were led by greed to kill the messengers and the son of the owner. The owner was patient and continued to send messengers though they maltreated the first ones. In both cases the owners did what they could to get a good harvest, but there was disappointment because of the evil intentions of the labourers.

Anxieties and worries can lead us into doing things which are not pleasing to God. God has given us the necessary graces to be able to live a good life, but we think more about what we will get and thus leave behind what is noble and honourable.

We have received baptism and thus cleansed from what is unclean; we are fed with the body of Christ, and we have received the Holy Spirit to teach us, guide us in the way of the Lord, strengthen us, speak for us, enlighten us, and pray within us, among other activities of the Spirit.

The graces bestowed upon us are great enough to help us know God and live in His presence all the time. Above all, He has given us His Son to be our Saviour and Redeemer, and when we pray in His name, we receive the things we are anxious of every day.

God has entrusted to us all that He created, to help us to survive and serve Him, but like the workers, we want to be our own masters leaving Him behind, worshiping the work of our hands. What is honourable is now relative, what is true is relative, what is pure is relative, what is praiseworthy is relative, and whatever is gracious is relative.

What kind of fruit is the Lord looking for? Have we given Him His share of the investment He has made in us? Jesus is the vine and we are the branches; we are grafted in Him, (Jn. 15:1-8). He gave us His body, and died to save us from the evil one; what has come out of all that, when we consider our way of life? We bypass the source of peace to seek peace and joy in empty pleasure and wealth. Those workers who thought they would have the vineyard for themselves, lost everything including their lives. This means that God is the ultimate power who controls everything, and in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

Parents are investing in their children, spending thousands of dollars in education and other things. What do you expect in the near future? Children, do you think you can offer something good in return to what you are receiving? Is the investment made in you by your parents and relatives going to be a waste or will it yield good profit? If you want to yield good fruit and not thorns or thistles, then don't gamble your life with premarital sex, alcohol, drugs and truancy. They have nothing to offer, but misery and hopelessness.