

Read

Isaiah 25:6-10a

Psalm 23:1-3a,
3b-4, 5, 6

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14 or 22:1-10



REFLECTION

Today's readings are about feasting but are not meant to be about literally eating a lot of food. The abundance of food in these stories teaches us about the importance of trusting in what God provides. When we are in the middle of a dark or challenging time, it is often hard to remember that God has our back, is never going to leave us, and provides what we need. In the Gospel parable of the wedding feast the king invites guests but they do not come. God provides everything we need to work through even the most difficult situations, but we must heed the invitation. To respond to God's invitation, we need to turn to him in prayer in our moments of desperation so that we can be sustained by the Holy Spirit's strength, courage, and wisdom. Just as today's psalm says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4). When life gets scary or difficult, remember that God has not left; rather, he offers us an abundance of grace!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How might daily prayer help you see the world differently?
- ❖ How might you invite others to experience God's presence in their lives?

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 15, 2023

ACTION

Pay attention to God's work in your everyday life. At the end of each day, reflect on what happened that day and find one moment that demonstrates God's abundant grace at work in your life. Perhaps you found the courage to go talk to a teacher about a struggling grade. Maybe you found peace in a moment of prayer. Or maybe you made time for others when you spent time having a good talk with a friend. The possibilities are endless. Keep track of these moments in a journal or post these instances of God's abundant grace on social media so that others might start recognizing them in their lives as well.



"Brand New Eyes"

—Bea Miller https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xffuHHjO_Us



October 15, 2023

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #142A

Isaiah 25:6-10a

Psalms 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14 or 22:1-10

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

There are so many times in our lives when we use excuses to not do what we should. The parable in today's Gospel reminds us of the most important invitation that we will ever receive: God's offer of salvation. Using a parable to teach about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells of a king who is hosting a wedding banquet for his son. When the first round of servants returns without any of the invited guests, the king sends another set out, also unsuccessful. Finally, he sends them out instructing them to bring whoever will come. This represents God's generous love. Some people will refuse or ignore his invitation, but he offers it to all. We are invited to respond "Yes!" to God's invitation.

Q FOCUS: *God's invitation to salvation is for all and no excuse is more important than his invitation.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate St. Teresa of Avila on October 15. She discerned a call to religious life and in 1536 she entered a local Carmelite convent when she was twenty-one years old. The community was too lax, and she worked to reform Carmelite orders, eventually leading to the founding of the Discalced Carmelites. She was also a mystic, receiving visions from God and writing them down in great detail so that they could in turn help others come to a deeper

love of Jesus. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970 for her mystical writings, leadership, and effect she had on the religious community. She is the patron saint of Spain, those that suffer from headaches, and those in religious orders.

Church Teaching Connection

"Many guests were invited but something unexpected happens: they refuse to take part in the celebration, they have other things to do; indeed, some of them show contempt for the invitation. God is generous to us, he offers us his friendship, his gifts, his joy, but often we do not welcome his words, we show greater interest in other things and put our own material concerns, our own interests, first. The king's invitation even meets with hostile and aggressive reactions. Yet this does not impede his generosity" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, October 9, 2011).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:1-10

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants

to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast." Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, "The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find." The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Jesus continues to teach about the kingdom of heaven through the use of parables. In today's Gospel, he uses a story about invited guests to a wedding.

► **Have you ever received an invitation to a fun, special, or important event? What did it feel like to receive the invitation? What did it feel like to attend the event?**

Birthday parties, weddings, family get-togethers, sports games, or other events all offer a time of food, fun, and fellowship. The wedding in the parable today is no different. The king has invited people for the wedding of his son. If the weddings of our family and friends are big events, we can only imagine what it would be like go to a royal wedding! We get a small glimpse of it through video of recent royal weddings that have happened over the past several decades. Who would turn down an invitation to them!

However, when the servants go to get the invited guests, that is what happens. The guests choose not to come for one reason or another. He sends out more servants, but he gets the same lack of response from the invited guests. This time, the guests even kill some of the servants. Just because they didn't want to come to the wedding! Finally, the king sends the servants out to invite whoever they can find.

Sometimes what we are being invited to do or to go to isn't the best thing for us. And that is okay. But there are times in our lives that God calls to us and we are just like the invited guests in today's parable. We look for excuses not to answer his call. We try to think of reasons we cannot do what he is asking of us.

► **What are some excuses teens might use to not follow the will of God and respond to his call?**

► **What about reasons a person might give for not going to Mass, to pray, or to participate in the sacraments?**

I have to do my homework. I'm not that bad of a person. I'll do it later. I want to spend time with my family at the football game instead of going to church. There could be a long list. All these thoughts are common. It is vital that we recognize them and move past them because they are all just excuses. They are ways that we tell Jesus no when he calls to us. They are the ways that Satan tries to put space between us and Jesus. Once we see that these excuses are harmful to our relationship with God, we can put them aside and answer the call that we are given.

The last part of this parable is just as important as the beginning. When the king welcomes whoever the servants found on the streets into his home, it is like God welcoming all into his kingdom. The kingdom of God is not just for the few or the most perfect, most holy people we know. God has a kingdom that welcomes all who respond "yes" to his invitation of salvation. This invitation to be in a relationship with him is open to everyone. As Christians we are called to share that invitation that we have said yes to already with others. Extending the invitation can look like being a friend to someone. To listening and praying for and with them. If we are able to put our excuses aside and treat all like Jesus did, we are helping him build up the kingdom of God.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 46.

We must trust God when he calls us.

To respond to God is to respond in love.

God's invitation of salvation is for everyone.

Act on the Word

No Excuses!

For this activity, you will need access to the song "Here I Am, Lord" by Dan Schutte and markers and large sheets of paper.

Divide the large group into smaller groups of three to five people. Give each group a large sheet of paper and one marker. Ask them to write as many excuses as they can to the following prompts. You may add more prompts or come up with your own.

- * I cannot do my homework because. . .
- * I cannot babysit my siblings because. . .
- * I cannot do the chores because. . .
- * I cannot go to school because. . .
- * I cannot go to church because. . .
- * I cannot give money to the poor because. . .

Give them a minute and half or so to see how many excuses they can come up with. When time is up, have each group count the number of excuses they

came up with. Point out to them how quickly we can come up with excuses!

Then play the song "Here I Am, Lord" by Dan Schutte and invite the teens to write down how the lyrics describe who God is and what he is doing in the world. When the song is over, have the teens share what they heard and what stood out to them in the song. These are the things God is doing in the world through the work of his faithful disciples. How can they be part of that work?

Closing Prayer

Ever-loving God,
we turn to you in our need
and seek you when we are lost.
Let your spirit of generous love
open our hearts to receive your invitation
of salvation,
that we might rejoice forever in the presence
of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.