

28th Sunday-Year A

Is. 25:6-10

Ps. 23: 1-6

Phil. 4:12-14, 19-20

Mt. 22:1-14

Enhancing God's Vision for the World

Beloved in Christ, today we celebrate the feast of our patron, St. John XXII, and I wish you a Happy Feast Day! Please wish me something. We thank God for the gift of St. John XXIII for our parish. Thank all of you, our dear parishioners, for the Sacrifices you have made over the years to build such a welcoming and wonderful parish. In a special way, I thank all who are involved in different ministries here at our parish. Please join me say thank you to all of you parishioners!

Our readings today remind me of an experience I had when I was in grade school. I had an office mate who struggled with his identity. One day he told me in the office that he would go through surgery to become a woman. Given how sensitive that topic is and not wanting to be accused of telling him what she should do, I just kept quiet and told him, "Thanks for sharing." After three months, he returned to school after the surgery changed into a woman but spent most of the time in the office crying. So I gathered courage one day to ask if everything was okay. It was then she shared that she had regretted her decision and was unhappy and that she wishes somebody would have stopped him. Upon hearing this, I felt so guilty and asked myself should I have said something? Did I fail him? Did I fail God? I think I did, and I still feel guilty about it anytime I think about him.

Beloved, the Prophet Isaiah, in our first reading, describes God's vision for our world and our individual lives. He says God's plan for our world is *to fill our lives with joy, wipe away every tear from our eyes, take away the shame caused by our sin, and give us a reason to praise God*. The prophet goes on to tell us that God needs a "mountain," dedicated to Him, where he can make his vision for the world come alive. In the scriptures, the mountain is a symbol of the Temple and the Church, the people of God. The mountain then represents the Church as a community and the individual Christians who make the Church. Thus, when people encounter the Church; their lives should be filled with joy; their tears should be wiped away; their shame should be taken away, and their lives should be touched in such a way that gives them a reason to praise God. When people encounter you and me, this vision of God must come alive for them.

In our second reading, St. Paul says the Christians at Philippi made God's vision come alive for his. They shared in his distress and wiped away his tears through their charity. They gave him a reason to praise God.

In the gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ reminds us that our cooperation with God essential in realizing God's vision for the world. At the time of Jesus, it was common for a king in Israel and the Ancient Near East, who gave a royal banquet, to provide a special dress for all who were invited (This is similar to our concept of a dress code for special occasions today). There was usually a room in the palace where all the invited guests would be helped by servants to put on the prescribed garment. Jesus describes different types of responses to the king's invitation. Some offered excuses, others responded with violence, and others came prepared, while others came but wanted to have the party on their own terms. Jesus talks about a man who came to the banquet but wanted to be there on his own terms. He was not supposed to go buy the garment, all he had to do was to accept it and put it on, but for some reason, he refused. He wanted to be at the party but on his own terms. Jesus says the king will not allow this because that destroys the beauty and the joy of the banquet. Beloved, I don't think those of us gathered here belong to the group that responded with violence; at least we are not killing people because of the gospel. However, there are times that we can identify with the other three groups. There are times when we come prepared and obey God and bring joy to God's people and glorify God. However, there are times when we give excuses for not living the gospel, and, other times, we are like the man who was invited to the royal banquet but failed to fulfill his responsibility of putting on the right dress. Unfortunately, most of us want to be Christians on our own terms. It just doesn't work like that.

Today, we celebrate a man who spent his life-enhancing God's vision for the Church and human society. I ask myself, am are my words and actions enhancing God's vision for the world or my own vision? Are your words and actions enhancing God's vision for the world or your own vision? Beloved, our world is hurting, and many people are crying out to God for help. God wants a mountain on which people can encounter God and experience the joy of life and have their tears wiped away. Can God find that mountain in me? Can he find that mountain in you? May God give us the grace to hold his people in our hearts!