

An old couple in their 90s died in a car crash. They had managed to live so long in good health due to the wife's interest in healthy food, and exercise. Once inside heaven St. Peter took them to a lavish buffet dinner. Looking at all the high cholesterol, high carb food the husband asks, "Well, is there another table with low-fat and low-cholesterol, low carb food.?" St. Peter replied, "No, this is what you get in heaven. And the best part is...you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like, and you never get fat and you never get sick. This is Heaven." The old man looked at his wife angrily and said, "This is all your fault. If it weren't for your diet food, I could have been here ten years ago!

Yes, one day we all hope to enjoy the lavish heavenly banquet.

Today's Scripture readings we hear about this banquet. For last couple of Sundays, kingdom of God was compared to vineyard. This Sunday kingdom of God is compared to a banquet.

In the first reading, Isaiah describes the Messianic banquet on the Lord's mountain in the Holy City of Jerusalem which Yahweh is preparing for His people. The good news is that it is a great feast of "rich food and choice wines." But for the children of Israel the bad news is that Yahweh invites all people, including Gentiles, to the banquet.

In the second reading, St. Paul advises the Philippians to put their trust in the power and goodness of a providing God, Who, in Jesus, has given His Church everything needed to enable His followers to participate in the Heavenly banquet.

In the Gospel we see how the King invited all those in the guest list. At first, he invited them, then he sent servants to call those who were invited. Again, he sent other servants to tell those who were invited that his dinner was ready. But they made silly excuses and went off to their business. When the king saw that those invited were not worthy and refused to come then he sent his servants to main streets with a fresh invitation for all, good and bad alike. And behold the wedding hall was filled with guests.

The king was very happy to see that the wedding hall was filled, and it came to his notice that a man was there without wedding garment. The king was surprised to see him and asked politely, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" But the man said nothing, neither did he apologize. So, the king asked the attendants, to cast him out of the marriage hall into the outer darkness.

The Israelite were the first people invited to this heavenly banquet. God sent his prophets again and again to remind them. But they continued to be stubborn and refused to come. They mistreated the prophets, even killed them. As a result, the king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. This could be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 AD.

The prophecy of Isaiah is now fulfilled in us as today God invites the non-Israelites like us to this heavenly banquet. He makes no discrimination, and everyone is called to the wedding feast, provided they have the wedding garment. But admission to the feast is not enough. It is necessary to wear the wedding garment.

On the day of our baptism we received the spotless white wedding garment. To participate in the banquet, we are asked to put on the same spotless white garment; we were given on the day of our Baptism as the symbol of purity. If it gets stained due to sins, God in his great mercy has given us the means of washing our clothes through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Participation in the banquet requires living lives worthy of the Kingdom whole of our life.

Remember, just as we see in the parable the king will not entertain any excuse or justification if we fail to put on the required garment for entry into the feast

Our participation in the Eucharistic banquet as often as possible can help us to prepare ourselves in participating in the heavenly banquet with proper garment.