

Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
October 15, 2017  
Fr. Rick Lorenz

## Reflection

Last Friday was a special day; it was an anniversary. 100 years ago, the Blessed Virgin Mary made her final apparition to the children at Fatima. There were important links to previous her apparitions. In 1858, Our Lady of Lourdes had made her final apparition **on the feast** of Our Lady of Carmel: July 16. Now Our Lady of Fatima appeared **as** Our Lady of Carmel, in order to confirm and renew her promise. Those who receive and wear the brown scapular will be lifted out of purgatory on the Saturday following their death. This is known as the Sabbatine Privilege, told to Pope John XXII in 1322: "I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday (Sabbath) after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free, so that I may lead them to the holy mountain of life everlasting." This privilege is given to all who wear the brown scapular, observe chastity according to their state in life, and pray the rosary. So last Friday a few of the faithful made a small pilgrimage to Manotick. There Fr. Titus enrolled them in the Brown Scapular. Like the newly baptized receiving the white garment of salvation, they were robed the scapular. They marked another step on their journey of faith to the glory of heaven.

In today's Gospel, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a wedding banquet. Everyone is invited, beginning the people of Israel, "but they would not come."

Is 25:6-10a  
Ps 23  
Phil 4:12-14, 19-20  
Mt 22:1-14

The history of salvation is one of covenants made and broken and made again. Everyone is invited to the banquet, including those indifferent to his love; those with a preference for the world, "but they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business." The poor and lowly are invited, "from the main streets"; for whom the promises of the world are revealed as empty. And sinners are invited, who accept the grace of conversion that is achieved by the power of God. We're invited through parables that are centered on Jesus; he is always at their heart. Simple but deep, they make clear the need for action; to give all; to become disciples in order to understand. Everyone is invited, "the good and the bad, so the wedding hall [is] filled with guests."

We can understand that we enter the wedding hall, we join the kingdom by baptism. Through baptism, we become members of the Church. Not just members of this parish, or this diocese, but of the Church extending through all nations to the ends of the earth. A Church that stretches to the generations of the past, and reaches forward into the future. A Church of the living, striving for virtue; of the suffering becoming pure; of the triumphant rejoicing in heaven; all united by one faith that becomes love.

All except for one...one who stands for many. "When the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?'" The man is like someone with faith, but without love.

When we're baptized, we're clothed in a white garment; a sign of Christian dignity that demands purity. We're given a candle; a sign of faith to be kept burning brightly. Later, we can wear the brown scapular. It helps us to receive the grace of the sacraments. Through virtue strengthened by grace, we're equipped to choose love; but love remains a choice. The man without a wedding robe is like one who believes but remains unchanged; he receives but does not accept and so cannot give. Like everyone else, he would have been offered a wedding robe when he entered the banquet; a wedding robe given freely; one which he could have worn out of love for his host, his king, and his son. But he refused so could not remain. Speechless, he jarred and jangled; a resounding gong, a clashing cymbal; so he was bound and thrown, where he would weep and gnash.

Baptism gives us faith, but faith has to be guarded and fed. That way it can deepen and grow into love, even as it's tested and tried. All this is the work of God. He permits our struggles because of the good that can result. But he also gives us the Eucharist to nourish our faith, "a feast of rich food that swallows up death, a feast of well-aged wines that wipe away the tears from all faces."

So let us receive communion with the confidence of St. Paul, who grew in faith, hope and charity: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."