TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Getting desperate enough to ask for help can open the door to recovery. The harder work sometimes comes after life begins to improve. The crisis that brought us into a meeting passes, relationships begin to stabilize, and we discover that freedom requires more than simply showing up. We have been invited into a new way of life, and eventually we have to decide whether we are willing to live it.

Sunday's gospel gives us the image of a king preparing a wedding feast for his son (Matthew 22:1–14). The invitation is generous, yet many of those first invited refuse to come. Some are distracted by other concerns, while others reject the invitation altogether. The king then sends his servants into the streets to gather *"all they found, bad and good alike"* until the hall is filled (Matthew 22:10).

That image feels familiar in recovery. We usually do not arrive because we have finally put everything in order. We come because something has broken down. We discover that the room is filled with people from different backgrounds who share a common need for grace, honesty, and a new way of living. No one earns a seat before walking through the door.

Still, Jesus does not leave the parable there. One guest arrives without a wedding garment, and the king asks how he came in unprepared. This part can sound harsh if we hear it as though God invites us freely and then looks for a reason to exclude us. The better recovery parallel is that grace welcomes us as we are, but it does not leave us exactly as it found us.

A meeting can save our life, but simply sitting in a chair each week does not automatically produce recovery.

Eventually, willingness has to become action. We allow ourselves to be known more honestly. We work the Steps instead of only talking about them. We begin making choices that reflect the new life we say we want. Grace gets us through the door, and cooperation with grace begins changing the way we live.

Saint Paul speaks to another part of this journey in the second reading. He says, *"I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance"* (Philippians 4:12). Then comes the familiar line, *"I can do all things in him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13). Paul is not describing unlimited achievement. He is describing the strength to remain rooted in Christ whether life feels empty or full.

That becomes especially important in long-term recovery. Crisis can make us willing. Comfort can make us forgetful. When life begins to improve, we may slowly loosen our grip on the very practices that helped restore us. Paul reminds us that spiritual maturity means learning to remain faithful in both hardship and abundance.

Psalm 23 gives this whole Sunday a quiet backdrop: *"You spread the table before me"* (Psalm 23:5). God is not rationing grace. He is inviting us to receive what we could never provide for ourselves.

God does not ask us to become worthy before coming to the table. He invites us as we are. But He loves us too much to leave us unchanged. Recovery begins when we accept the invitation and continues as we allow grace to reshape the way we live. Whether life feels abundant or uncertain, Christ remains enough. Our task is to keep showing up with a willing heart and become the people His generosity is making us capable of becoming.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where in your recovery have you been tempted to settle for simply "showing up" rather than allowing grace to change the way you live?
- What has helped you remain grounded in recovery when life becomes more comfortable and the urgency that first brought you here begins to fade?
- What might accepting God's invitation more fully look like for you in this season of recovery?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 25:6–10a
RESP. PS. Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6
SECOND READING Philippians 4:12–14, 19–20
GOSPEL Matthew 22:1–14

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