

**Twenty-eighth Sunday *per annum***  
**Year A, 2026**

Is 25:6-10

Phil 4:12-14, 19-20

Ps 23

Mt 22:1-14

*Do not take the Body of Christ for granted*

Sometimes we pastors have to the duty to call out the evils in the world as they appear, lest by our silence the flock entrusted to us be deceived, deceived into thinking that these things are perhaps not so evil after all or deceived into believing that their shepherds agree with or are indifferent to the evils of the world.

Three evils in the news recently. News has recently come out of an event that happened about two years ago in the Netherlands, where euthanasia is legal and becoming more common. A two year old child Dutch child was euthanized. This is the tragic logical outcome of a culture of death that sees disability and suffering as an obstacle to life. It is barbaric, horrific, unjustifiable, and evil. When people are “inconvenient” – ill or suffering or disabled – they are to be loved and cherished all the more. People are not animals that can be “put down,” whether for economic reasons or on grounds of so-called “compassion.” “Medical aid in dying,” as euthanasia is now being called, is legal in about fourteen states here in the US. This dehumanizing evil is spreading.

Second, Peter Thiel, the billionaire owner of Palantir, an AI company that specializes in security and mass surveillance, has for the third time publicly gone after Pope Leo, this time by calling him “useful idiot” for the Chinese Communist Party. Thiel, who loves

surround himself with the smoke of religious and theological imagery, has implied, in a strange, apocalyptic way, that anyone who thinks that AI should be regulated in any way is helping the antichrist. According to Thiel, he is on the side of Christ and Pope Leo is on the side of the antichrist. But the reality appears to be that anyone who gets in Thiel's way of the unrestricted pursuit of wealth and power through mass surveillance, he brands as being on the side of the demonic or satanic. I don't know if this man is evil, but I will say that many of his ideas are morally and spiritually deranged and that by his words and actions he demonstrates a moral and spiritual corruption that is, we could say, touched by the demonic. This man needs prayers for conversion and deliverance.

A final evil to call out, a spectacular display of moral and spiritual corruption, of rank barbarism, of retrograde violence, of hypocritical pseudo-Christianity: the United States' Secretary of Defense, who purports to be a Christian and is an admitted Christian nationalist, is proposing to live-stream a military execution by firing squad, which would be the first public execution in our country in nearly one hundred years. I will not explain to you why this proposed public execution is barbaric, indecent, unbecoming, and evil, except to say that if you don't get it, you need to examine your conscience deeply, consider the quality of your allegiance and adherence to the gospel of Christ, and then perhaps make an appointment with your pastor to

discuss the spiritual and pastoral remedies appropriate for you. If we don't get why this is evil, then something evil is getting at us. And this is precisely why evil must be called out when it appears, lest we become used to it, normalize it, and let it cling to us, sully and corrupting us.

Let's see now if we can make a complete pivot away from these evils to contemplate something altogether more sublime, and holy, and joyful. The readings from scripture today all speak of something near and dear to us in south Louisiana: eating and feasting.

From the prophet Isaiah: *"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines."* From Psalm 23: *"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want ... You spread the table before me."* From Philippians: *"I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need."* From the Gospel: *"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son."*

Each of these passages deals with food in its own way, and each deserves a whole separate explanation or even its own homily, as each touches on the theme of eating or feasting to make a particular point, drawing us into a deeper understanding of the mystery of God. There is, however, a common thread that runs through all these readings, and that thread is this: God himself provides the food for the feasting. This is stated boldly and plainly in Isaiah: *"the*

*Lord of hosts will provide ... a feast of rich food and choice wines.*" In Psalm 23, the psalmist knows that he will lack for nothing – which is the meaning of *"I shall not want."* God *"spreads the table before"* him. It is God who gives him repose, rest, refreshment, guidance, protection, encouragement, blessing, peace, goodness, and kindness. In Philippians, Paul attests how God – *"my God"* Paul says, with a note of tenderness and belonging – *"will supply whatever"* is needed. This is the secret that Paul has learned, such that abundance or need are all the same to him. Why? Because God's own strength will sustain him in every circumstance. And finally in the gospel, Jesus offers another parable, likening the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast that a king gives to his son: *"I have prepared my banquet ... and everything is ready; come to the feast."*

God will provide. This is an echo of what we reflected on last Sunday, about how we are to *"have no anxiety at all."* God will provide for us even as he provides for grasses and birds. When we need to eat, God will provide. When we need comfort, God will provide. When we need correction, God will provide. When we need deliverance, God will provide. When we need forgiveness and mercy, God will provide. When we need to pray, God will provide. When we need to worship, God will provide.

God will see to it. God sees to all things. *Deus providebit.* The first time we encounter this scriptural expression – God will provide – is in the book of Genesis, chapter 22, when God commands

Abraham to offer a holocaust sacrifice, a burnt offering ... his son, Isaac, his only child. The boy Isaac is carrying the wood for the sacrifice and asks his father: *"Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering? 'My son,' Abraham answered, 'God will provide the sheep for the burnt offering'"* (vv 7-8). Isaac is that sheep, but at the last minute, God stays Abraham's hand, and Abraham, looking up toward the heavens, spies a *"ram caught by its horns in the thicket"* (Gen 22:13). Abraham offered that ram in sacrifice, and a saying was born: *"On the mountain, the LORD will provide"* (Gen 22:14).

What was foreshadowed in "the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith," Jesus completes: *"on the mountain"* – Calvary – the Lord himself provided the lamb of sacrifice, the Lamb of God, by whose dying death was destroyed and by whose rising life was restored. The same Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world, gives us his own Body and his own Blood as food. He provides a meal for us and our cup overflows. He provides for us a new way to worship, a new covenant, which is the memorial of his sacrifice, replacing all the sacrifices of old. The banquet table and the sacrificial altar are one and the same: feasting, we remember; celebrating, we worship; giving thanks and praise, we sacrifice.

All this points us to the holy Eucharist and the holy Eucharist is all these things. When it comes to how we understand the Eucharist and speak of the Eucharist, it is good to remind ourselves that the best approach is a both/and approach, not either/or. Is the

Eucharist a meal or a sacrifice? Yes. It is both a meal and a sacrifice – a sacrificial meal. Is this piece of furniture here in the sanctuary to which I am pointing a table or an altar? Yes. It is both a banquet table and the altar of sacrifice. Is the Eucharist a gift from God to us or something we offer to God? Yes, it is both, as we Catholics have prayed for millennia in the First Eucharistic Prayer: “we ... offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us ... the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.” What God has given us – the gifts of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ – that is what we offer the Lord in return *“for all the great good done for [us]. [We] will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD”* (Ps 116:12-13).

By adopting such a both/and approach, a truly Catholic approach, we avoid many theological and interpretative polemics, which so often plagued the past, caused divisions among Christians, and which even today provoke dissensions among Catholics, putting the unity of the Church, which is also the Body of Christ, at risk. Which leads us to another question: is the Body of Christ the Church or the Eucharist? By now, you know the answer. Yes, scripturally and theologically the Body of Christ refers to both, the Church and the Eucharist. You see how the both/and approach broadens our understanding of the Eucharist in all its rich symbolism?

Isaiah reveals that on his holy mountain, God provides a rich feast *“for all peoples.”* The gospel parable completes that revelation by

showing that it pleases to Lord *“to summon the invited guests”* so that his hall may be *“filled with guests.”* But not all invited are worthy. By sin, neglect, or indifference, many disqualify themselves. By disbelief and doubt, others reject the invitation outright. Because of casual carelessness, another was put out. It is not hard to make the pertinent connections and to reach a conclusion: the Body of Christ is not to be taken for granted, whether the Body of Christ be understood as the Church – those who are *“counted among the flock of [the] chosen”* – or as the Eucharist – which is truly, really, and substantially the presence of Christ among us as the food of everlasting life, a foretaste of the promised feast to be celebrated eternally in the heavenly kingdom.

May it please the Lord to bind us to himself always as his own beloved people, his invited guests made worthy by the merciful love by which we are cleansed and made his own, the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. And so we pray: Grant us, almighty Father, to be so refreshed and nourished by the heavenly food we receive, that we may in truth become what we have consumed, the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, a eucharistic people, the Eucharist itself, *“a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory”* (EP IV). Amen.