My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I’m sure that we all are praying for the Synod of Bishops in Rome. It’s a Synod that Pope Francis called to reflect upon marriage and the family. It is an Extraordinary Synod, so it is a Synod in preparation for next year’s Synod on the same topic.

So today, let us continue our prayers. This coming week is the last week of the Synod. So it is a good time to especially pray for that. Asking that all of us in Church and the world, in a sense, that we can have a better understanding of the importance of marriage and family in the life of society and the life of the Church. So let’s keep that intention in our prayers this coming week.

Our readings from Sacred Scripture today, as I was saying before, call us to reflect on the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven.

So in the first reading from the prophet Isaiah we hear how the prophet gives us a beautiful picture of a time when there is no more death, no more suffering. Every tear has been wiped away!

He shows us a mountaintop where all people can come to see God and rejoice with him and share a feast of rich food and choice wines. Sounds like a California celebration!

But it helps us to understand, in human terms, the beauty of what we are called to be at the end of our lives and by the mercy of God, in his Kingdom.

It also gives us a picture of the world, as God wants it to be. The world that God wants all of us to share.

So the first reflection on these readings today is that Kingdom of Heaven is our destiny. As we pray in the responsorial psalm: I shall live in House of our Lord all the days of my life.

So the question for us — the challenge to us today — is to reflect: how we can get to this mountaintop? How do we reach the Kingdom of Heaven?

Obviously it is clear to all of us, that God’s Kingdom is not like a specific place, or like a destination on a map. It’s not a place you can point to and say, “There it is.” It’s not somewhere “out there” or “up there.”
The Kingdom begins for us in Baptism, when we receive the Holy Spirit and we become a part of God’s Church, become a part of the family of God.

We can think about the Kingdom of God as a way of living — a relationship of discipleship. Following Jesus and loving God and loving one another.

And that’s what Jesus is talking about today in the Gospel.

Like the prophet Isaiah in the first reading, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom is like a feast — a wedding feast that a King throws for his Son. It is something we are invited to join.

The King invites all these people to the wedding and they decide not to go — some of them even kill the King’s servants. Then the King invites everybody — anybody who can hear the invitation of his servants.

And then, as we heard, the King finds one man who is not dressed properly — he doesn’t have a wedding garment. So the King doesn’t let him enter the wedding.

He says, Many are invited, but few are chosen.

So what is Jesus talking about here? I think it is challenging us.

Jesus is telling us that we have been chosen — each one of us. We’ve been chosen to hear the Gospel, receive the gift of faith in Baptism, and enter his Kingdom.

But, my brothers and sisters, we cannot enter the Kingdom without love. Without love we have nothing, we cannot get in the door of Heaven. And words are not enough. Good intentions are not enough. We need real love — real works of mercy.

Jesus is telling us, today, with this passage of the Gospel — with this beautiful parable — that we must “clothe” ourselves in works of charity and compassion. This is the “wedding garment” that he is talking about in today’s Gospel.

The Kingdom really begins for each one of us in our hearts. It begins when truly begin to love as Jesus taught us to love.

The Kingdom begins when we try to do everything out of love for God — loving him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. It begins when we love our neighbor as our self — totally, with a love that is a love that sacrifices for other people, a love that serves other people.

But Jesus, my dear brothers and sisters, challenges us today, to really live this Gospel. To really live our Baptismal promises the follow him on the path that he leads us. The path that spreads God’s love and compassion wherever we go.
It is so important that we reach out to one another in love and compassion. We need to show one another the love and nearness of God. Where there is love, God is there.

So let us, today, ask for that grace that we can really center our life on loving God and loving one another.

As Pope Francis says, this is a real change of the way we do things, in the sense that our society is asking us to worry about material things or to look for happiness in ourselves; when real happiness is, as we all know, is loving God and loving one another.

So Pope Francis says that Jesus “shifts our understanding.” He says, “It’s not just about seeing the other as someone like myself, but of the ability to make myself like the other.”ii Real change. Not making them like I am, but going out of myself. To love them where they are.

So we need to open our hearts and open our hands to our brothers and sisters. Charity and mercy are the ways of the new evangelization. Through our works of mercy we proclaim that Jesus is risen today and alive among us! That’s the way that people are going to realize that God is close to them — through our works of love and mercy.

Finally, in the second reading of today’s Mass, St. Paul gives us that great line — it’s one of my favorite lines in all of the Scriptures: \textit{I can do all things in him who strengthens me!}

This is true, my dear brothers and sisters! God will give us the grace and the strength to accomplish his will in our lives. With him, we can go everything! We can do great things with our lives, if we only trust in God and try to love him and do his will.

So as we continue to celebrate our Sunday Eucharist this morning, let us ask for the strength this week to be more caring, more loving and more forgiving of others.

And may our Blessed Mother Mary, help us to make a beautiful garment with our lives — a garment of love and compassion for every person.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[i] Readings: Isa. 25:6–10a; Ps. 23:1–6; Phil. 4:12–14, 19–20; Matt. 22:1–14.
\item[ii] Luke 17:21; 1 Cor. 6:19; Mark 12:30–34.
\item[iii] Message for 48th World Communications Day (June 1, 2014).
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