

The Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

The King's Wedding Feast: A Concise Study of Three Interpretations

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Element	Text and reference	What it says
Entrance Antiphon	<i>Si iniquitates observaveris</i> ; Ps 130 (129):3–4, adapted	If the Lord kept account of iniquities, no one could stand; with him there is propitiation. It closes by naming the God of Israel.
Collect	<i>Tua nos, quaesumus, Domine, gratia</i>	That the Lord's grace always go before and follow the assembly, and keep it constantly intent on good works.
First Reading	Is 25:6–10a	On this mountain the Lord makes a feast for all peoples, casts death down for ever and wipes away tears from every face.
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 23 (22):1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; response from v. 6cd	The Lord shepherds the singer, who wants nothing; a table prepared, the head anointed, the cup; mercy following to the house of the Lord.
Second Reading	Phil 4:12–14, 19–20; vv. 15–18 not read	Paul knows how to be full and hungry and can do all things in him who strengthens him; God supplies their want; a doxology.
Alleluia verse	cf. Eph 1:17–18, recast in the first person plural	That the Father enlighten the eyes of our heart, to know the hope of our calling.
Gospel	Longer form: Mt 22:1–14	The invited refuse the king's wedding; the hall is filled with bad and good; a guest without a wedding garment is cast out; many are called, few chosen.
Gospel	Shorter form: Mt 22:1–10	The same parable as far as the filling of the hall, without the guest and the closing saying.
Prayer over the Offerings	<i>Suscipe, Domine, fidelium preces</i>	The faithful's prayers are offered with the gifts, that through these acts of devout worship they may pass over to heavenly glory.
Communion Antiphon	First option: <i>Divites eguerunt et esurierunt</i> ; cf. Ps 34 (33):11	The rich have known want and hunger; those who seek the Lord will lack no good thing.
Communion Antiphon	Second option: <i>Cum apparuerit Dominus</i> ; 1 Jn 3:2, adapted	When the Lord appears, his own will be like him, because they will see him as he is.
Prayer after Communion	<i>Maiestatem tuam, Domine, suppliciter deprecamur</i>	As the Lord feeds the assembly with the Body and Blood of Christ, so may he make them partakers of the divine nature.

The two forms of the Gospel are alternatives, and so are the two Communion antiphons (the second under *Vel*); every other element is required. Scripture is quoted in the Douay–Rheims (Challoner), a public-domain study translation, not the Lectionary's approved English proclaimed at Mass; psalms are numbered as in the Lectionary, the Vulgate's number in parentheses.

Sense	Synthesis
Literal	Isaiah promises a feast for all peoples on the Lord's mountain, where death is cast down. Jesus tells the chief priests and elders of a king whose invited refuse his son's wedding, one to his farm and another to his merchandise, while the rest kill his servants; the hall is filled from the roads, and in the longer form a guest without a wedding garment is cast out. Paul has learned to be full and to be hungry.
Allegorical	The king is the Father, and the wedding the Church joined to the Son through the mystery of the Incarnation (Gregory), gathered from Jews and gentiles alike (Jerome). Aquinas sets Isaiah's feast on the mountain where Christ suffered beside the king's "my dinner is prepared". In the longer form the garment is charity (Augustine, Gregory), Christ put on (Aquinas), or the Spirit's glory (Hilary).
Moral	Set spiritual things above even necessary ones (Chrysostom); no temporal thing should keep anyone from God (Aquinas), who on Philippians bids plenty and want be used alike with virtue. In the longer form: let charity be born and grow, and clothe the naked (Augustine); keep the garment the call gave (Chrysostom); be humble, not knowing whether you are chosen (Gregory).
Anagogical	The wedding is the glory received in the resurrection (Hilary), when death is overcome and Christ's kingdom comes (Jerome, on Isaiah), and all desire is filled (Aquinas, on Philippians 4:19). In the longer form the king's coming in is the judgment (Jerome, Gregory). Where the second Communion antiphon is chosen: the more charity, the fuller the vision of him as he is (Aquinas).

Scriptural Date and Location

Textual unit	Citation	Location	Date
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 23 (22):1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; response v. 6cd	No place named in the verses	Historical setting – Occasion date unresolved. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Inherited attribution: the Vulgate title, in the Douay–Rheims “A psalm for David” (22:1), ascribes the psalm to David and gives no date or occasion, so the setting answer is unresolved. The composition date is the Psalter’s common critical bound, from the introduction to the Psalms in the New American Bible Revised Edition, which holds that no psalm can be dated securely; it is not a date for this psalm.			
Communion Antiphon, first option	cf. Ps 34 (33):11, an adaptation	By the title, the court of Geth, where David fled from Saul to Achis (1 Kgs 21:10)	Traditional attribution – disputed: David (reign in the usual chronology), B.C. 1055–1015. Superscription setting: David’s flight to Achis, king of Geth, A.M. 2944. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
<i>Narrated event, by the title: David changing his countenance before Achimelech (33:1), referred by the Douay–Rheims to 1 Kings 21:10–15.</i>			
Inherited attribution: the title “For David”. The attribution answer is David’s reign in the usual chronology the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> reports (Corbett), marked disputed. The superscription answer dates the episode the title names, on Haydock’s A.M. reckoning; it is not a date of composition. The composition answer is the same common bound. The antiphon’s “rich” is the Latin and Greek reading; the Hebrew has young lions.			
Entrance Antiphon	Ps 130 (129):3–4, an adaptation	No place named in the verses	Historical setting – Occasion date unresolved. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
A song of ascents, “A gradual canticle”; the title names no author and no occasion. The composition answer is the common bound, not a date for this psalm.			
First Reading	Is 25:6–10a	“In this mountain” (25:6, 10), the “mount Sion” and Jerusalem where the Lord of hosts reigns (24:23)	Traditional attribution: Isaias (ministry in Souvay’s traditional account), B.C. 740–701.
Traditional attribution: “Isaias the son of Amos” (1:1). The answer is the length of the prophet’s ministry in the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> ’s article on Isaias (Souvay); it dates the prophet, not chapters 24–27 or this oracle, for which no composition date is held.			
Gospel, longer form	Mt 22:1–14	In the temple at Jerusalem, to “the chief priests and ancients of the people” (21:23)	Event: The parable of the marriage feast, proposed in the Temple, A.D. 29 (derived). Composition – disputed: c. A.D. 38–45; c. A.D. 40–42; A.D. 40–45; c. A.D. 60–68; c. A.D. 64–67; c. A.D. 50.
Gospel, shorter form	Mt 22:1–10	As for the longer form	Event: The parable of the marriage feast, proposed in the Temple, A.D. 29 (derived). Composition – disputed: c. A.D. 38–45; c. A.D. 40–42; A.D. 40–45; c. A.D. 60–68; c. A.D. 64–67; c. A.D. 50.
<i>Narrated event: a parable spoken in the temple, after the question about Jesus’ authority and the parables of the two sons and the vineyard.</i>			
Traditional attribution: St Matthew the Apostle. The event answer dates the telling of the parable, not the wedding it narrates: a derivation within Maas’s chronology in the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> , which places it on the Tuesday of the last week in Jerusalem. The composition figures are those the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> reports: Jacquier’s, from ancient writers “at variance” and from Catholic critics where “opinion is rather divided”, and last Durand’s, for an original text he holds to have been Aramaic. They date the book, not the saying.			
Alleluia verse	cf. Eph 1:17–18, an adaptation	From Paul, “the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (3:1); to the saints “at Ephesus” (1:1)	Composition – disputed: A.D. 58–63; A.D. 61.
Traditional attribution: St Paul, writing in captivity. The range is the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> ’s for the letters of the captivity, whose place, Caesarea or Rome, it calls “a much mooted question”; the year is Prat’s. They date the letter, not the verse made from it.			
Second Reading	Phil 4:12–14, 19–20	From Paul “in my bands” (1:7, 13), with greetings from “Caesar’s household” (4:22); to the saints “at Philippi” (1:1)	Composition – disputed: A.D. 61; A.D. 62–64.
Traditional attribution: St Paul, writing in captivity. The year is Prat’s for the letters of the captivity; the range is Vander Heeren’s for Paul “at Rome”, which he calls “the nearly unanimous opinion”.			
Communion Antiphon, second option	1 Jn 3:2, an adaptation	No place named in the letter	Composition: c. A.D. 90–100.
Traditional attribution: St John the Apostle. The range is Durand’s for “the Johannine writings”; Drum finds the arguments “probable in favour of Ephesus and also for the last few years of the first century”.			

The Propers: Themes and Movement

This Mass asks who comes to God's feast, and what keeps a person from it. A king makes a wedding for his son and sends to call the invited, "and they would not come"; the hall is filled instead from the roads with whomever the servants find, "both bad and good" (Mt 22:3, 10). Isaiah has already spread the table: on his mountain the Lord makes "unto all people" a feast of fat things and of wine, and casts death down for ever (Is 25:6, 8). Around these two readings the other texts set a confession that no one stands on his own account, a prayer for grace at both ends of every good work, an apostle held neither by plenty nor by want, and a table at which the communicants ask to share the divine nature.

- **Grace before the call:** the Entrance Antiphon and the Collect.
- **The feast promised and the table spread:** the first reading and the psalm.
- **Freedom and hope:** the second reading and the Alleluia verse.
- **The king's wedding:** the Gospel, in its longer or shorter form.
- **Offering, table and vision:** the Prayer over the Offerings, the Communion antiphons and the Prayer after Communion.

The antiphons and orations are the Missal's for the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time and serve all three years; the readings, psalm and acclamation are Year A's, Lectionary no. 142. The books state their own relations: the first reading is chosen for its relation to the Gospel, the psalm responds to it, and the acclamation greets the Gospel. Philippians, read on its fourth and last Sunday, and Matthew each follow a course of their own.

The *Ordo lectionum Missae* sets a title over each reading: *Faciet Dominus convivium, et absterget lacrimam ab omni facie*, the Lord will make a feast and wipe away the tear from every face, from Isaiah 25:6 and 8; *Quoscumque inveneritis, vocate ad nuptias*, whomever you find, call to the wedding, from Matthew 22:9, a verse both forms of the Gospel contain; and *Omnia possum in eo, qui me confortat*, I can do all things in him who strengthens me, from Philippians 4:13. The two titles that belong together set a feast for every face beside a call to whoever is found.

A question no one can answer alone

The Entrance Antiphon is made from Psalm 129, a song of ascents. It asks who could stand if the Lord marked iniquities, and answers that with him there is propitiation; it ends by naming him the God of Israel. The Collect, *Tua nos, quaesumus, Domine, gratia*, asks that his grace *semper et praeveniat et sequatur*, always go before and follow, and keep the assembly constantly intent on good works. Before any invitation is heard, the Mass has asked for grace at the beginning and at the end of what it does.

A feast on the mountain, a table in the house

Isaiah's feast follows a song of thanks to the God who has been "a strength to the poor" (25:4). On "this mountain" the Lord of hosts makes the feast for all people, destroys the bond that held them, casts death down headlong, wipes away tears from every face and takes away his people's reproach; and in that day they say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him" (25:9).

The psalm answers in the first person. The Lord rules the singer, who shall want nothing; the shepherd's images give way to a host's, a table prepared in the sight of enemies, the head anointed, the cup filled, and mercy following the guest into the house of the Lord. What Isaiah promises to all peoples, the psalm receives as one guest's table.

Full and hungry, and the hope of the calling

The second reading comes from the close of Philippians. Paul has learned to be brought low and to abound, “to be full and to be hungry”, and he can “do all things in him who strengtheneth me” (4:12–13). He commends the Philippians for sharing his tribulation; the verses on their gift are left out, and the reading resumes with God’s supplying of all their want and a doxology. That supplying is a wish in the Vulgate and a promise in the *Nova Vulgata*; both name what is filled *desiderium*, desire.

The Alleluia verse turns Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians into the assembly’s prayer for itself: that the Father enlighten the eyes of our heart, to know the hope of our calling. The word “calling” stands in the verse that greets a Gospel about those who were called.

The king’s wedding

The parable is the third Jesus tells in the temple to the chief priests and the ancients of the people (21:23), after the vineyard parable’s saying that the kingdom shall be taken from them (21:43), at which the chief priests and Pharisees “knew that he spoke of them” (21:45). The king’s invitation is refused twice, the second time though “all things are ready”. Some neglect it and go off, “one to his farm and another to his merchandise”; the rest seize the servants and kill them, and the king’s armies destroy the murderers and burn their city. The servants are then sent to the places where the roads go out, *ad exitus viarum*, and they gather bad and good until the hall is full.

In the longer form the king comes in to see the guests, finds one without a wedding garment and asks him, “Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?” The man is silent, and is bound and cast out, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (22:11–14). The shorter form ends with the hall full. The choice between the forms is pastoral, and nothing in the books makes either the proper one; what rests on the garment and the closing saying holds only where the longer form is read.

Offering, table and vision

The Prayer over the Offerings asks the Lord to receive the faithful’s prayers with the sacrificial gifts, that through these acts of devout worship they may pass over to heavenly glory. At Communion the Missal offers either the psalm verse on the rich who have known want and hunger while those who seek the Lord lack no good thing, or John’s promise that when the Lord appears his own will be like him, because they will see him as he is. The Prayer after Communion asks that those fed with the Body and Blood of Christ be made partakers of the divine nature, the words of 2 Peter 1:4. The feast promised on the mountain and refused in the parable ends as a table at which the communicants ask to pass into glory, to see, and to share.

Three questions, three readings

The Fathers and Doctors who expounded these passages comment on single texts, none on this Mass as a whole; each reading of the whole below is the editor’s synthesis, and every witness is credited only with what he says of his own passage. Three questions divide them. The first asks what the feast is and for whom it is made: Gregory the Great reads the wedding as the Church joined to the Son, Jerome and Aquinas read Isaiah’s banquet of Christ, and Aquinas alone sets that banquet beside the king’s dinner. The second, which only the longer form raises, asks why a guest the king’s own servants gathered is cast out: Augustine and Gregory name the missing garment charity, and other witnesses name it otherwise. The third asks why the invited would not come: Gregory, Hilary, Chrysostom and Aquinas weigh the farm and the merchandise. The three answers are compatible; the witnesses part over what the garment is, over where the wedding stands, and over the burnt city.

The Propers: Detailed Commentary

What the king prepares, and for whom

The parable's first sentence holds the first interpretation's question: who is the king, who is the son, and what is the wedding? Gregory the Great answers twice and corrects himself between. The Father made the wedding for his Son, he says first, when in the Virgin's womb he joined him to human nature; but such a joining is ordinarily made of two persons, and he will not have the Redeemer thought of as made out of two. So he restates it: *Apertius ergo atque securius dici potest quia in hoc Pater regi Filio nuptias fecit, quo ei per incarnationis mysterium sanctam Ecclesiam sociavit*, it can be said more openly and more safely that the Father made the wedding for the King his Son in this, that through the mystery of the Incarnation he joined the holy Church to him (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 38.3).

Jerome says who that Church is: God almighty makes the wedding *Domino nostro Iesu Christo et Ecclesiae, quae tam ex Iudaeis, quam ex gentibus, congregata est*, for our Lord Jesus Christ and the Church, gathered as much from the Jews as from the gentiles (*Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, col. 159). Irenaeus, writing against those who divided the God who calls from the God who judges, sees "one King and Lord, the Father of all", who "had from the beginning prepared the marriage for His Son" and "called together from all the highways, that is, from all nations, [guests] to the marriage feast of His Son" (*Against Heresies* IV.36.5–6). John Chrysostom asks why the parable speaks of a marriage at all, and answers, "That thou mightest learn God's tender care, His yearning towards us", for there "all things are full of spiritual joy"; and because the parable comes after the vineyard and its slain son, he adds of a wedding made after a death, "Hereby He proclaimed the resurrection also" (*Homilies on Matthew* 69.1). Hilary of Poitiers draws that thread tightest: the wedding is *vitae coelestis et in resurrectione suscipiendae aeternae gloriae sacramentum*, the sacrament of the heavenly life and of the eternal glory to be received in the resurrection (*Commentarius in Matthaeum* 22.3, PL 9, col. 1042). They agree that the king is the Father, the son Christ, and that the call goes beyond the first invited; they name the bride differently.

Isaiah's feast is the other half of the *Ordo's* correlation. Jerome places it after the Passion, for all the nations on Mount Sion, and reads the wiping of tears as the moment *quando morte superata, Christi advenerit regnum*, when death is overcome and Christ's kingdom has come (*Commentarii in Isaiam* VIII, PL 24, col. 300). Thomas Aquinas makes the one join between the two readings that any witness cited makes. The feast is made on this mountain *quia ibi Christus passus est . . . vel quia ibi iudicabit, ut dicitur Matth. 22: Ecce prandium meum paravi*, because Christ suffered there, or because he will judge there, as Matthew 22 says, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner". He distinguishes three feasts: the household feast of the Church on pilgrimage, for which he cites 1 Corinthians 11:26 and this Sunday's psalm, *Impinguasti in oleo caput meum*; the private feast of the soul; and the solemn feast of the heavenly court, given *ad satietatem*, to the full (*Expositio super Isaiam* c. 25, pp. 501–502). On the psalm he reads the table also as *mensam sacramentalem, scilicet altaris*, the sacramental table of the altar (*Postilla super Psalmos* 22). That the feast is the altar's is his reception; the literal sense of Isaiah and of the psalm is a banquet God gives.

The other interpretations take the feast as given. The second asks how a guest is fit for it. The third asks what the invited refused, and Gregory answers that it was a mystery: the man given over to earthly labour or worldly business *mysterium incarnationis dominicae pensare et secundum illud vivere dissimulat*, pretends not to see the need to weigh the mystery of the Lord's Incarnation and to live by it (38.5). His restated wedding thus stands at the centre of the first interpretation and of the third.

Now, or at the resurrection?

Where does the feast stand? Gregory places the parable's wedding in the present Church, because of its mixed guests: *per has regis nuptias praesens Ecclesia designatur, in qua cum bonis et mali conveniunt*, the present Church, in which the bad come together with the good (38.7); Luke's great supper, from which no one is cast out, is for him another parable and the eternal banquet (38.1). Augustine speaks of "two feasts of the Lord; one to which the good and evil come, the other to which the evil come not", and joins them: "Be that feast which now is, received worthily, that we may attain to the other" (*Sermo* 90.1, 4). Hilary makes the wedding the glory of the resurrection. Aquinas gives four expositions, among them the wedding *in communi resurrectione*, when what is mortal in us will be swallowed up by life, but for the parable follows Gregory: *secundum Gregorium, oportet exponere de praesentibus*, it must be expounded of present things (*Super Matthaeum* c. 22, p. 280).

These are emphases, not contradictions: Gregory does not read the parable's wedding as the last banquet, nor Hilary as the Church on earth. The first interpretation joins the two feasts without identifying them. In both forms of the Gospel, what joins them is the resurrection, which Hilary's wedding awaits and Chrysostom hears in a wedding made after a death. Isaiah supplies the end of the line: Jerome reads its death cast down with Paul's "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:54), and Aquinas reads the wedding of the resurrection in Paul's words on the mortal swallowed up by life (2 Cor 5:4). Where the longer form is read, the judgment stands between as well, for every witness who comments on the king's coming in to see the guests places it there, and the present feast becomes the anteroom of the last.

Why the invited would not come

Chrysostom puts the third interpretation's question aloud: "For who would not choose to come to a marriage, and that a King's marriage, and of a King making a marriage for a Son?" (69.1). The first refusal is not hostility. The invited "neglected and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise" (22:5); only "the rest" kill the servants (22:6).

Two witnesses judge the excuses and two read them. Chrysostom, who lists Luke's oxen and wife beside Matthew's farm, grants that "the excuses seem to be reasonable; but hence we learn, though the things which hinder us be necessary, to set the things spiritual at a higher price than all" (69.1). Aquinas: *Videbantur habere iustam causam exterius; sed Dominus non recipit: quia nulla temporalia debent detinere de veniendo ad Deum*, outwardly they seemed to have a just cause, but the Lord does not accept it, because no temporal things ought to keep anyone from coming to God (p. 281). Gregory reads the two excuses as two habits of life: to go to the farm is *labori terreno immoderate incumbere*, to lie on earthly labour beyond measure, and to go to the merchandise *actionum saecularium lucris inhiare*, to gape after the profits of worldly business (38.5). Hilary reads ambition and avarice, some held *ambitione saeculi tamquam agro*, by worldly ambition as by a field, more by trading *ob pecuniae cupiditatem*, for love of money (22.5, col. 1043). Gregory and Hilary name different appetites; Chrysostom and Aquinas agree that even a reasonable one is no excuse.

Jerome weighs the busy against the violent: those taken up with other things are guilty of a lesser crime than those who *verterunt humanitatem in crudelitatem*, turned kindness into cruelty (col. 159). The lesser crime is still a refusal; but his distinction marks this interpretation's limit, for a story of distraction leaves out the parable's violent half, which the first interpretation has to carry. The second command sends the servants *ad exitus viarum*. Jerome reads the outlets of the roads as the place of the gentiles (col. 160); Gregory as the failure of men's actions, *quia illi plerumque facile ad Deum veniunt, quos in terrenis actibus prospera nulla comitantur*, because those very often come easily to God whom no prosperity accompanies in their earthly doings (38.6). Jerome answers who the new guests were, Gregory why they came.

The burnt city, and to whom the parable is spoken

“The rest” kill the servants, and the king’s armies destroy them and burn their city (22:6–7). Chrysostom reads the burning as “the things that took place under Vespasian and Titus”, forty years after the Passion, “that He might show His long suffering” (69.1). Jerome gives two readings of the armies, avenging angels or the Romans, and Aquinas gives both, adding that God’s anger *non commotionem significat, sed vindictam*, signifies not agitation but just punishment (p. 281). Gregory and Hilary read the armies as angels and the fire as the eternal punishment of the persecutors (38.5). This is the verse the first interpretation, which rejoices in tears wiped from every face, must carry.

Irenaeus, Hilary, Chrysostom, Jerome and Aquinas identify the first invited with Israel; Chrysostom says the parable foretells “the casting out of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles”, and Jerome’s sentence on Isaiah sets the feast *nequaquam populo Iudaeorum*, not for the people of the Jews. Gregory identifies the refusers with the persecutors of the preachers. The parable was spoken to the chief priests and elders of the people (21:23). The Second Vatican Council, in *Nostra aetate* 4, governs how such readings are presented, though it passes no judgment on any Father’s exegesis. It recalls that the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance (Rom 11:29), and teaches that what happened in the Passion cannot be charged “against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today” and that the Jews “should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures”. Under that bound the identification belongs to the Fathers who make it, the parable’s hearers are the leaders in the temple, and the warning falls, as Gregory and Chrysostom themselves turn it, on the baptized: *Nos sumus, fratres charissimi, qui in nuptiis Verbi discumbimus*, we are the ones, dearest brethren, who recline at the wedding of the Word (38.11); “Hear ye, as many as having partaken of the mysteries” (69.2). Isaiah’s “all people” cannot be narrowed to “not this people” on the strength of Jerome’s phrase, which is his alone.

The guest without a wedding garment

Where the longer form is read, the second interpretation meets the parable’s sharpest difficulty: the king’s own servants gathered the guest, so why is he blamed for his clothes? The witnesses first keep the call free. Irenaeus: God “does indeed, through His infinite kindness, call the unworthy; but He examines those who are called” (IV.36.6). Hilary: the calling ought to have made them good, *quia sancta est*, because it is holy, but *per vitium inemendatae voluntatis discrimen est vocatorum*, through the fault of an unamended will there is a difference among the called; the fault was one *Deus solus invenit*, God alone finds (22.6–7). Chrysostom: “although to be called and to be cleansed was of grace, yet, when called and clothed in clean garments, to continue keeping them so, this is of the diligence of them that are called” (69.2). Aquinas: *noluit quod mali venirent nisi pararent se*, he did not will that the bad should come unless they prepared themselves (p. 282).

What the garment is, they say differently. Augustine searches by elimination. It is not baptism, “for this garment I see in the good, I see in the bad”; nor the altar, nor fasting, nor miracles. It is “charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim 1:5): “Let charity be born in thee, if it be yet unborn, and if it be born, be it nourished, fostered, increased” (*Sermo* 90.5–6). And it is given: “Clothe others, and ye are clothed yourselves. . . . Christ is naked; and He will give you that ‘wedding garment’ ” (*Sermo* 95.7). Gregory reaches the same answer by the same route. If the garment were baptism or faith, who could have entered without them? *Quid ergo debemus intelligere nuptialem vestem, nisi charitatem?* What then are we to understand by the wedding garment, except charity? The believer lacks it *si charitatis gratiam non custodit*, if he does not keep the grace of charity (38.9).

The others name it in their own terms: for Chrysostom “life and practice”; for Irenaeus works of righteousness, “so that the Spirit of God may rest upon us”; for Jerome the Lord’s commandments and the works that make the new man’s clothing (cols. 160–161). Aquinas gathers these into one: *Quae est ista vestis? Christus*, what is this garment? Christ. Some put him on by the sacrament, some by charity, others by remembering death

or by conforming their works to his; and to have the wedding garment is to put him on *per operationem bonam, per conversationem sanctam, per caritatem veram: et si unum deficiat, malum*, by good works, by holy living, by true charity, and if one of these is lacking, it is bad (p. 282). Hilary's answer stands against Augustine's and Gregory's: the garment is *gloria Spiritus sancti*, the glory of the Holy Spirit, received *bonae interrogationis confessione*, at the confession of the good questioning, and kept unstained to the kingdom (22.7). He does not say baptism; the phrase recalls Peter's words on baptism (1 Pet 3:21), and on the editor's reading of that allusion his garment is received at baptism and kept by the baptized. Augustine and Gregory say expressly that it is not baptism, because the bad are baptized; Chrysostom's clean garment given with the call stands between them, and Aquinas counts the sacrament among the ways Christ is put on while the garment he requires is good works, holy living and true charity together.

This disagreement is real, and the second interpretation does not settle it. It claims what the witnesses share: the garment is required of those whom the call has gathered, is to be kept, and is answered for when the king comes in; and those who say where it comes from, Chrysostom, Augustine, Gregory and Hilary, say that it is given, as the call is. Here the first interpretation's two feasts return: Gregory's present Church of bad and good is the hall into which the king comes, and Augustine says the closing saying shows "who in this present feast are accounted to be such, as to be brought to that other feast, where no bad men shall come" (90.4).

"Friend", the silence, and the few who are chosen

In the longer form the king's question begins with a word the witnesses weigh. Jerome: *Amicum vocat, quod invitatus ad nuptias est*, he calls him friend because he was invited (col. 161). Gregory: *amice per fidem, sed non amice per operationem*, friend by faith but not in deed; before that last rebuke every argument of excuse falls silent (38.12). Yet Gregory tempers the scene at once: whoever has the garment, but not yet perfectly, *ad pii regis ingressum desperare veniam non debet*, must not despair of pardon when the merciful king comes in (38.12). That coming in is the judgment for Jerome, Gregory and Aquinas, who adds death and the Church's tribulations (col. 160; 38.14; p. 282).

The witnesses come to the closing saying from different places, and not all of them weigh how few the chosen are. Gregory passes to it from the guest cast out, *in quo videlicet omne malorum corpus exprimitur*, in whom the whole body of the wicked is expressed (38.14), and had already told his hearers not to be alarmed *quod in Ecclesia et multi mali et pauci sunt boni*, with the ark narrowing to one cubit, the strait way of Matthew 7:13–14 and the threshing floor's few grains (38.8). Augustine states a proportion: the one man "not only was many, but those many in numbers far surpassed the number of the good" (90.4). Aquinas gives the saying its reason in the parable, *quia quidam nolunt venire, quidam non habent vestem nuptialem*, some will not come and some lack the garment, and joins it to Matthew 7:14, "few there are that find it" (p. 282). Irenaeus sets it beside the former covenant, in which "with many of them was He not well pleased" (IV.36.6; 1 Cor 10:5). Hilary puts the scarcity among the chosen, never in the call: *Non est igitur paucitas in invitatis, sed raritas in electis*, there is no fewness among the invited, but a rarity among the chosen (22.7). Jerome reads the saying otherwise: *non initia, sed finis quaeratur*, not the beginning but the end is sought (col. 161).

Hilary, Augustine, Irenaeus and Gregory keep the call itself without limit, and Gregory turns the saying on his hearers: *Quia vocati sumus, novimus; si sumus electi, nescimus*, that we are called we know, whether we are chosen we do not know; so each must humble himself, and *omnes in sola divina misericordia gaudeant*, let all rejoice in the divine mercy alone (38.14, 16). The saying itself names no number; the witnesses' judgment of how few are chosen comes from the texts they set beside it.

To be full and to be hungry

Chrysostom hears in Paul’s “I have learned” a discipline “not easy of attainment”, and holds plenty as dangerous as want: “Many know not how to be full, as for example, the Israelites, ‘ate, and kicked’” (Deut 32:15), and the success is “not mine own, but His who has given me strength” (*Homilies on Philippians* 15). Aquinas makes the verses the mark of the wise man, *ille perfectus est qui scit uti quolibet statu*, he is perfect who knows how to use any state, because *ex abundantia erigitur animus contra Deum, ex paupertate deiicitur*, abundance raises the mind against God and poverty casts it down (*Super Philippenses* c. 4, lect. 2, pp. 401–403). No witness sets Paul beside the parable; heard beside it in the third interpretation, he is the guest who would have come, not without goods, for he has just received the Philippians’ care, but not held by them.

The reading’s last verse serves two interpretations. Aquinas expounds the Vulgate’s *impleat omne desiderium* first as God’s return to the givers, and then of glory, *quia ibi implebitur totum desiderium*, because there all desire will be filled, with the verse he gave Isaiah’s third feast, *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*, “I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear” (p. 403). The first interpretation hears in it the feast completed, the third the end of its own line. Both rest on the Latin *desiderium*, which the Vulgate and the *Nova Vulgata* share and the Douay–Rheims renders “want”. Chrysostom’s text is a blessing: Paul “invokes blessings upon them, as poor men do”.

Where the first Communion antiphon is chosen, the third interpretation ends on the rich who went hungry. Augustine meets the objection that “many rich men that are wicked die in their riches” with the spiritual sense: “Those rich then lack, they lack, and what is heavier, they lack bread”, the bread of the one who said, “I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven”, a joining of the psalm to John that is his own (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 33). Robert Bellarmine gives the verse “a higher meaning”: those attached to the temporalities of this world “always hunger and need”, while those who seek the Lord, clinging “to the Supreme Good”, possess all that is good (*Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Ps 33:10–11). The reading rests on the Latin and Greek text; the Hebrew has young lions. Aquinas reads the responsorial psalm’s “I shall want nothing” of the future, *quoniam habebimus Deum*, because we shall have God (*Postilla* 22). In the first interpretation the antiphon’s rich lack the Living Bread; in the second they stand against Augustine’s heart “filled with such jewelry of virtues”.

The Alleluia verse enters each line by a different comment. Chrysostom says the hope of the calling is “as yet . . . hidden, but not so to the faithful”, the condition of the invited who have not yet seen the feast, and that God “would thus have us become good of our own will” (*Homilies on Ephesians* 3), the second interpretation’s difficulty in a sentence. Aquinas reads the enlightened eyes *contra eos, qui habent oculos illuminatos tantum ad temporalia cognoscenda*, against those whose eyes see only temporal things (*Super Ephesios* c. 1, lect. 6), which is the third’s.

The Missal’s prayers in three hearings

No witness cited joins the Missal’s antiphons and orations, which serve all three years, to these readings; each interpretation hears them along its own line. The Entrance Antiphon asks who could stand if the Lord marked iniquities. Augustine asks, “And what is this propitiation, except sacrifice?” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 129.3): in the first interpretation, the door to the feast. Bellarmine says that without grace we cannot even see “the enormity of the offence”: in the second, why the guest had nothing to say. Augustine says that those who prosper in their sins are deepest in the depths, for “a deceitful happiness is itself a greater unhappiness”: in the third, the farm and the merchandise.

For the Collect’s grace that goes before and follows, Aquinas founds the division of grace on two psalm verses, the second this Sunday’s “thy mercy will follow me”, and quotes Augustine: *praevenit ut vocemur, subsequitur ut glorificemur*, grace goes before that we may be called and follows that we may be glorified (*Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 111, a. 3). He does not cite the Collect. In the first interpretation the call is the

king's invitation and the glory the feast completed; in the second the grace clothes the guest and keeps the garment on him, and Blessed Ildefonso Schuster, commenting on the Gospel, holds call and garment together: "God calls our souls, but they must be in accord with their calling" (*The Sacramentary*, vol. 3, p. 173); in the third the prayer's *intentos*, intent on good works, names the attention the invited gave to farm and trade. The Prayer over the Offerings asks that *per haec piae devotionis officia* the faithful pass to heavenly glory: the passage to the feast completed, the works of the garment offered, or goods given rather than held.

Where the second Communion antiphon is chosen, the three hear it most differently. In the first the guests see the King as he is, for Aquinas, giving Origen's reason for the parable's "man who is king", says *cum videbitur sicuti est, tunc erit Rex*, when he is seen as he is, then he will be King (p. 279), though he cites Paul's "face to face" for it. In the second the vision is measured by charity: "he will have a fuller participation of the light of glory who has more charity" (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 6), and Augustine, on the letter's next verse, which the antiphon does not include, says "Thou purifiest thyself, not by thyself, but by Him who cometh to inhabit thee" (*Homilies on the First Epistle of John* 4.7). In the third it is desire stretched by waiting: "if thou art full of vinegar, where wilt thou put the honey?" (4.6).

The Prayer after Communion asks that those fed with the Body and Blood of Christ be made partakers of the divine nature. The fourth *Mystagogical Catechesis*, transmitted under Cyril of Jerusalem's name, joins the two: "we become partakers of the divine nature" (4.3); and Aquinas calls grace *participatio divinae naturae* (I-II, q. 110, a. 3). In the first interpretation the prayer asks that Gregory's restated wedding be shared at the table; in the second the garment is the life of that grace; in the third the verse of 2 Peter whose words it takes goes on, "flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world", a clause the prayer does not quote.

Where the three interpretations agree and part

All three read the parable as a call wholly God's gift that can be refused or wasted, and no witness cited denies another interpretation's claim; Gregory and Aquinas contribute to all three from different sentences. They differ in the question put and so in the verses that carry it: the first the *Ordo's* correlation of Isaiah with the Gospel, the second Matthew 22:11–14 with the Collect, the third Matthew 22:5 with the second reading and the first Communion antiphon, which neither the books nor any witness joins to the parable.

Their four senses part accordingly. Literally, the first reads the feast promised and the hall filled, the second the guest inspected, the third the excuses and Paul's contentment. Allegorically, the first finds the Son's wedding with the Church; the second the garment, named charity, works, Christ put on or the Spirit's glory; the third the mystery of the Incarnation refused and the call passing to the gentiles at the outlets of the roads (Jerome) or to those whom no prosperity held (Gregory). Morally, the first asks that the present feast be received worthily, the second that charity be born and kept in humility, the third that spiritual things be set above necessary ones. Anagogically, the first ends in the wedding completed at the resurrection, the second at the judgment and a vision measured by charity, the third in desire filled in glory. Their consequences differ with them: hope and the universal reach of the call, humility and the works of love, detachment and the right use of goods.

Three real disputes cross these lines: what the garment is, dividing Augustine and Gregory from Hilary, at the second interpretation's centre; whether the wedding is the present Church or the glory of the resurrection, an emphasis dividing Gregory and Hilary that shapes the first; and whether the burnt city is Jerusalem under Titus or the eternal fire, dividing Chrysostom from Gregory and Hilary, with Jerome and Aquinas giving both. Where the shorter Gospel is read, the third interpretation holds whole, the first keeps its two feasts joined by the resurrection alone, and the second keeps only the gathering of bad and good. Each hears both Communion antiphons, but the first antiphon weighs most in the third interpretation and the second in the first.

Appendix: Scope and Qualifications

Edition, formulary and occurrence. This concise study treats the Mass of the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, as the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, and the *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 142, give it for the dioceses of the United States, in the national calendar alone, for the occurrence of 11 October 2026. The antiphons and orations serve Years A, B and C; the readings, psalm and Alleluia verse are Year A's. Both forms of the Gospel and both Communion antiphons are treated: a claim that rests on Matthew 22:11–14 does not hold for a celebration that uses the shorter form, and a claim that rests on one Communion antiphon holds only where it is chosen.

Relation to the expansive study. Every claim here is drawn from the canonical study of this same formulary and its research records. The study prints the appointed Scripture, sets each element in its literary and textual setting, and develops the three interpretations at length, each with its own literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical senses and its own difficulties; nothing evidence-dependent is added here. The four rows on the first page orient a reader and do not replace those distillations. The second page condenses the study's dossier, printing the Date cells with their relation labels, alternatives and unresolved states exactly as the generated chronology record gives them.

Text and English. The Missal formulary was read for the study in the Latin of the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (2002), in a digitally typeset reproduction; no United States altar book was inspected, so the approved English orations were not read in any witness, and the Latin source of the Entrance Antiphon's closing words is not established. The Lectionary's boundaries rest on the national calendar for 2026, the bishops' conference's dated page of readings and no. 142 of the Latin *Ordo lectionum Missae* (1981); the printed United States Lectionary was not inspected, and whether it gives the psalm response as the dated page does, and whether it admits another Alleluia verse from a common set, remain open. The Greek of Isaiah 25 and Philippians 4:19 was not examined, and no manuscript was. All Scripture is quoted in the Douay–Rheims version as revised by Bishop Challoner, a public-domain study translation of the Clementine Vulgate. It is not the text proclaimed in the celebration: the controlling English is that of the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America* and, for the antiphons and orations, that of the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, neither of which is reproduced. The orations and antiphons are identified by Latin incipit and described; the descriptions are not translations and may not be quoted as the texts' words. English glosses of Latin passages, including the *Ordo*'s three titles, are the editor's renderings of the Latin beside them.

Reception and its limits. The witnesses named are those the study's bounded search read at the loci in the References. Chrysostom, Augustine's sermons, his expositions of Psalms 33 and 129 and his homilies on the First Epistle of John, the *Mystagogical Catecheses* and Irenaeus were read in the English of the Nicene and Ante-Nicene Fathers, Irenaeus in a machine-read text of the printed volume; Aquinas's *Summa* I in the English Dominican translation; Bellarmine in O'Sullivan's abridged English of 1866, the Latin not compared; Schuster in a text layer of the 1927 English. Jerome on Matthew and Isaiah, Hilary on Matthew, and Aquinas on Matthew, Isaiah, Ephesians and Philippians were read on page images of the printings named; Gregory, Aquinas's commentary on the Psalms and *Summa* I-II in electronic Latin texts. No witness was collated with a modern critical edition. Nothing is said here about who first proposed any reading, about any reading being the Fathers' common view, or about the order in time or the mutual dependence of the witnesses. No commentary on the Prayer over the Offerings or the Prayer after Communion was found. The *Mystagogical Catecheses* are cited as transmitted under Cyril of Jerusalem's name; their editor reports manuscripts that give them to John of Jerusalem.

Relations among the elements. The liturgical books state four relations: the first reading is chosen in relation to the Gospel (*Praenotanda* 106), the psalm responds to the first reading (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 61), the acclamation greets the Gospel (62), and the second reading and the Gospel each belong to a semi-continuous course. The Missal's antiphons and orations serve all three years. Among the witnesses cited, Aquinas joins Isaiah 25:6 to Matthew 22:4 and to Psalm 22:5, and reads Psalm 22:6 as the subsequent grace whose pair of terms the Collect uses, without citing the Collect; Augustine joins Psalm 33:11 to John 6:51. Every other connection drawn between one element and another, and each interpretation's reading of the whole, is the editor's synthesis, grounded in a witness's statement about his own passage where one is cited and otherwise resting on the wording of the texts. No witness cited comments on this Mass.

The Council's declaration. *Nostra aetate* 4 was read in the English and Latin of the Holy See's website. It is cited as the Church's teaching on how the identification of the first invited with a people is presented and applied, not as a judgment on the exegesis of any Father.

Chronology. The Date cells print the shared chronology corpus's answers with their relations and alternatives unchanged. The first reading's answer dates the prophet's ministry in one author's account, not the oracle. The Psalter's common composition bound is not a date for any of the three psalms. The superscription answer of Psalm 33 dates the episode its title names and rests on Haydock's notes, whose pages were not read. The Gospel's event answer dates the telling of the parable in one author's chronology; its composition answers, and those of the epistles, are dates of the books.

Rights. The Douay–Rheims, the Clementine Vulgate, the Nicene and Post-Nicene and Ante-Nicene Fathers, O'Sullivan's Bellarmine, the English Dominican *Summa*, the volumes of Migne, the Venice, Parma and Liège printings of Aquinas, Schuster's English and the *Catholic Encyclopedia* are in the public domain. Gregory's Latin is quoted in short passages from a licensed electronic edition, and the Corpus Thomisticum texts of Aquinas in short phrases. The Latin and English of the Missal, the *Ordo lectionum Missae*, the Lectionary, the *General Instruction*, the *Nova Vulgata*, *Nostra aetate* and the introduction to the Psalms of the New American Bible are protected; they are cited, and only incipits, the three titles of the *Ordo*, short phrases of the Council's declaration and a few words needed by the argument are quoted.

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