

The Twenty Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Luke 14:16-24

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. (KJV)

The present Gospel compels deep thinking about excuses that arise within us not to accept the Lord's ever-present invitations to receive eternal and life-giving nourishment.

The Lord God invites believers at every moment of life to draw near for nourishment. The invitation is particularly true during the Divine Liturgy. Believers have the opportunity to receive Christ's Precious Body and Blood.

The Church prescribes this Gospel each year. The Gospel is for each person. Honesty to the self and to the Lord are expected. It is time to admit to saying "no" too often to the Lord's invitations.

The Church provides the Nativity Fast at this time to intensely focus on the birth of Jesus Christ. Now is the time to increasingly draw near to the Lord with strong faith and an open heart.

Hunger in the soul is satisfied only in the Lord's nourishment. Declining invitations to be nourished at the Lord's supper deprives the soul of the food for life and salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ was very clear about the importance of partaking of His Precious Body and Blood. Jesus said: "Whoso eateth my **flesh**, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (Jn.6:54)

Decisions are made at every moment of life. These decisions have lasting impact. Careful use of the mind is needed in decision-making to ensure all thoughts and actions are directed toward the Kingdom of God.

Refusing the Lord's invitations jeopardizes the condition of the soul and personal peace. The possibility of experiencing eternal life and the Heavenly Kingdom is reduced each time the Lord's invitation to draw near is declined.

We never know when our last breath will be taken. The moment our heart will stop beating is not known. Jes Christ's return for the Last Judgment can occur when least expected.

Christians are advised to always be vigilant and watch. Keeping the Kingdom of God in mind at all times influences daily decisions. Love of the Lord is demonstrated in freely and willingly accepting invitations to draw near.

The condition of the heart, mind and soul affect each believer's decision-making. Personal interests and goals will dictate the extent the Lord's invitations are accepted.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Lay up for **yourselves treasures** in heaven, **where** neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and **where** thieves do not break through nor steal." (Mt.6:20)

The use of personal time, talents and energy will reveal the degree of interest in the Lord. Love of God is demonstrated by the extent God occupies the mind, fills the heart and illumines the soul.

We cannot say we love God when our time, energy and interests have very little to do with God. We cannot say we love God if we maintain interests and engage in activities contrary to the Lord's teachings.

If we seek to accumulate material wealth and fail to be generous to the Lord, lack of interest in the Lord becomes apparent. If God enters our mind only a few minutes per week, how can we expect to spend eternity in the Lord's Kingdom?

Each person is subject to the Lord's final judgment. Personal thoughts and actions determine where eternity will be experienced. If time is not made for God now, the person cannot expect God to provide for life eternal at the last judgment.

In the time remaining in the Nativity Fast, let us commit to accepting the Lord's invitations. Our lives will change and improve to the degree we are accepting of the Lord.

Daily life is full of temptations, invitations and requests. God is supreme and worthy of being first in decisions of acceptance. When God is first in our lives, all else is in proper perspective.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "For **where your treasure** is, there will **your** heart be also." (Mt.6:21) Welcome with great joy the invitations of the Lord. Draw near to experience the Lord's love, mercy and joy.

The Twenty Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, Philemon and Those with Them. Serbian Mother's Day December 14/27, 2020. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic