

Everyone loves a banquet ... God's is the best!

In 3 weeks, the "Her Choice" Crisis Pregnancy Center will be having their Annual Banquet. It will be held at *The Club*, that famous restaurant atop **Red Mountain** that is known for its fine food, elegant surroundings and breathtaking views of the city.

Now, if you go on **Thursday** evening **November 6th**, you'll arrive there dressed in your **best clothes**. You'll be seated in the Grand Ballroom with its **magnificent chandeliers** and you'll be served a **delicious meal at table** by **attendants** wearing **white gloves** all the while hearing **beautiful melodies** from a **Baby Grand piano**. And then while you enjoy your dessert and coffee, you'll be entertained by **videos, singers** and **Guest Speakers**.

You will be ... **at a Banquet**.

You know, it's **one thing** to be invited to a luncheon or a **dinner** or a **party** ...
but there's something very special about being invited to ... a banquet!

A *banquet* is defined as ... an elaborate, formal meal ... held in honor of a particular person or occasion. So, just hearing of a banquet brings up images of:
glamour and **grandeur** ... **elegance** and **jubilation** ... **festivity** and **feasting!**

Wow! It's **very special** to go to a Banquet ... **it's a privilege** to be invited.

You may know that **one of the first things** couples do when planning to get married is to make reservations at a Banquet Hall ... **making sure they have the place where they will go to celebrate** with their **family and friends** on their **Wedding Day**.

With great excitement, **engaged couples** then send out invitations to their **Wedding and Banquet Reception** one or two months prior to their Big Day ... having spent a good deal of time preparing their list ... and hoping that ... everyone will come.

Wedding Banquets are a **lot of fun**. **Everyone's** dressed up and having a good time ... **eating** and **drinking** and **laughing** and **dancing** ... **it's a very happy time!**

Perhaps you're like me and can remember back to **the Wedding Banquets** that you went to even as a little kid ... **how fun** and **memorable** they were!

Well, there's **another Wedding Banquet** that is coming up sometime in the future ... **but the exact date** has not yet been announced.

We heard about it in two of our Readings today.

In our **First Reading**, **God** said through 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.”*

Wow, that sounds like a Banquet
and a very big banquet too
because it will be ... for all peoples.

And **then, when Jesus**, came to be with us here on earth,
He indicated that the Wedding and the Banquet were much closer,

He tells of **His Father** saying ,
“*Behold, I have prepared my banquet ... everything is ready; come to the feast.”*

In saying this, **Jesus** wanted to get The Jews to see that there was going to be an
upcoming Wedding and Banquet celebration ... and all of them were indeed
invited to come, it’s just that **the date of the event wasn’t announced yet!**

Speaking both literally and figuratively to the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees,
Jesus says that a King was ready to give a wedding feast for his son.

If only they would have seen God the Father as the King and Jesus as His Son,
then they would have heard the invitation to come to the Banquet.

Sadly, they couldn’t see that they were the ones Jesus was referring to as ignoring
the invitation and even mistreating and killing those who delivered the invitation.

The **Jews**, were **the Chosen People** of God ... they were **the original guests**, but did
not accept His invitation. Instead, as Jesus foretold in His parable, many refused to
come ... some ignored His invitation and went away ... and a few laid hold of Him
and killed Him.

So ... as Jesus foretold in His parable, the King, who is God the Father brought
destruction and ruin to those people, as the **holy Temple** and the city of **Jerusalem**
was totally destroyed in the year **70 AD** ... just **40 years** after **Jesus was crucified.**

The invitation that Jesus offered to them is the very same invitation that Jesus
offers to all of us today ... the invitation to come to a Banquet ... a Wedding
Banquet that will be given by the Father and will be held in His house in Heaven.

God has been inviting people to this Banquet for a long time!

Jesus' parable goes on with **the King** proclaiming, "*The feast is ready, but those who were invited* (meaning the Jews) *were not worthy to come.*" **So the King says,** "*Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.*"

This is a clear reference to how **St. Paul** and many of the **other Apostles** went out to the world to preach the **Good News of the Banquet of the Lord to the Gentiles.** So rather than continuing to evangelize in **Jerusalem**, they then went out to all the surrounding **Pagan communities** of **Greece** and **Rome** and **Galatia** and **Thessalonica** where they gathered "*all they found*".

The **Gentiles** weren't the ones initially invited to the banquet, but they were hungry just the same and many accepted the invitation.

We are the **Gentile people** ... and we are here in **Church today** because the **Apostles** and all the **Bishops, Priests and Deacons** after them, and countless **Grandparents** and **Parents** and **Teachers** through the **past 2000 years** have faithfully handed on **God's invitation** to get ready to come to **His Banquet.**

You see, it was in the **grace of Baptism** that we received **God's Formal Invitation** to come to **the Banquet prepared for His Son**".

It's **His Eternal desire** ... that we accept it.

Hopefully, by experiencing **Christ's love** during our life and sharing our love for one another, we will grow each day in goodness until the day comes where we arrive dressed and ready to enter the **Heavenly Banquet** to take full possession of the reality of life with **Christ.**

Now, the date of the **Banquet** has not been announced ... but it is sure to happen!

When will it happen?

It will happen at the **end of time** when **Jesus** is fully united with **His mystical Body**, which is **all of us believers**, and we celebrate in the new **Heavenly Jerusalem.**

It's called the **Marriage Feast of the Lamb** and it's clearly referred to in the **Book of Revelation.**

You hear reference to this in every **Mass when**, right before **Holy Communion**, when **the Priest elevates the Host** and says, "*Behold the Lamb of God,*

*Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world,
Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb.*"

Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The Supper of the Lamb is the Heavenly Celebration of the Marriage ... of Jesus the Bridegroom ... to ... His Bride, we who believe Him and love Him.

Knowing how much we look forward to a big Banquet, And knowing that the exact date has not been announced, Jesus gives us a glimpse of the coming feast every time we celebrate Mass.

Here we gather as Royal Wedding Guests in His Father's Holy House on earth, to feast on God's word in Scripture and to feast on God's Word made Flesh, the Body & Blood of Jesus, the living Bread that comes down from Heaven.

If we have been properly prepared by Sacramental Confession and then receive the Eucharist here at Mass, we have washed our soul and dressed it with the holiness that is required to enter into God's Banquet.

This is very important.

Notice how Jesus points out that a man entered the Banquet who was not properly dressed ... and because he was not in a wedding garment, he was thrown out!

You see, the man was definitely invited,... he had the invitation ... but he failed to show up in the proper attire.

Jesus is saying that there's a certain expectation of how you will show up ... if you choose to come to God's Banquet.

This is no different than you attending a banquet here on earth.

As I said, the very word *banquet* denotes an occasion of elegance and majesty, of glamour and grandeur that would make you want to dress your very best for the occasion.

If you go to the Her Choice Banquet on Nov. 6th or to any Wedding Banquet, the expectation is that you will dress up for the occasion ... men in Suit coat or Jacket and women in dresses.

You wouldn't go in wearing jeans & T-shirt or shorts & tank top. You'd be thrown out ... and rightfully so.

There's a proper way to be dressed ... physically & spiritually ... for attending a banquet.

One affects the other. You know how special you feel when you dress up.

Which is why I continually call you to dress up when you **come to Church.**

This is not just a **prayer meeting** ... this is a **foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet** ... and **the one** in attendance is **none other than the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ**, present to us sacramentally in **the Eucharist**.

It's because of this most special encounter with **Almighty God** that **the Priest** wears **Royal Vestments** to preside at Mass. **The Chasibles** worn cost **\$600 each** and are **worthy attire** for this Banquet.

How inconsistent then for you the faithful to be dressed in anything less than your Sunday best.

Yet **some people insist** that **God doesn't care how they dress** for church. And **all I can say is reread Matthew's Gospel** where **Jesus says** that **the man not properly dressed was thrown outside** into the darkness where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth!

The way we dress our bodies is related to how we dress our souls

St. Paul says that we need to be, "*Clothed with Christ.*"

Are you dressing up your soul for this **foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet at Mass?**

When you dress up ... you think up.

For those of you who have **witnessed an **infant Baptism****, you'll recall that the **Baptismal Rite** includes presenting the baby with a **White Baptismal Garment**.

And the **accompanying prayer** says, "*See in this white garment, the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven*".

In the **Book of Revelation** we hear a description of **the redeemed in Heaven** as wearing robes that have been made white in the **blood of the lamb**.

So you see, **our souls** which are without stain at Baptism must remain unstained of sin in order to **enter into Heaven**.

We must have the proper wedding garment to attend the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.

God is so good. From **generation to generation**, He **continues to invite everyone** to **His Banquet**. In **Psalm 23** that we just prayed for our **Responsorial** we prayed, "*You spread the table before me; my cup overflows.*"

All of us have been invited. **We need to hold on to that invitation** as the **most precious** invitation that **we'll ever receive** and we need to remember the **address** of the **Banquet** and **be properly dressed** for the occasion.

Yes God has prepared an irresistible feast and He invites us to come.

How could anyone refuse such an offer?

And **yet** we can! You can say no ... you can choose not to attend!

Speaking of offers, perhaps you remember **the offer** made in the **1972** motion picture "**The Godfather**" ... the Academy Award winning movie about the activities of the **Mafia** families in **New York** in the late **1940's**.

Marlon Brando, who played **Don Vito Corleone**, the **Godfather**, had a way of getting anything he wanted.

He did it through **the use** of power, force and fear.

You may recall **one part** in the movie where a **Movie Director** passed over Don Corleone's **son** for a **part in a movie**. So Don Corleone sent his henchmen to convince the Movie Director that he really should hire the **Don's son**.

But the Movie Director tells the henchmen to get lost.

So **Don Corleone** told his men to "*go and make him an offer he can't refuse.*"

Then we have **the scene** where the Movie Director is waking up in his bed one morning and he feels something funny down by his feet, so he pulls back the satin sheets to reveal the **head of his prize horse** there in the bed with him.

The **scene ends** with him screaming in horror and we **can only assume** that the **Don's son** got the part.

They forced the **Movie director** to hire the Don's son.

They *made him an offer he couldn't refuse.*

But **you and I** know that it really wasn't an offer at all, **because** the man wasn't free to say **yes** or **no**. **To refuse again** would have meant **further horror**, possibly even the **death** of his **family** or of **him**.

The Godfather makes people an offer they can't refuse.

But, God the Father makes **us** an offer ... we can refuse!

The Jews did many years ago.

And **people** continue to refuse **his offer** every day.

We refuse his offer **every time** we sin

Sin stains **the wedding Garment** that we received on the day of our Baptism.

Our challenge is to keep our souls pure, reflecting the love and the light of God;
That's **the way** stay dressed and ready to enter **God's Banquet**.

Unlike the Godfather, **God the Father** doesn't use power or force to get what He wants. He simply invites and He allows us to choose!

We can say **yes** and we can say **no**. we can accept **the invitation to His Banquet** or decline it.

Let's remember that **the Banquet** is prepared and we're all invited!
And it's by clothing ourselves in Christ that we enter to **the Banquet**!

By staying clothed in Him here on earth, we will be properly attired to stay with Him forever in Heaven.

There's a **Banquet** planned and you're invited ...
the **date and time** have yet to be announced
But if you can come, it will be **heavenly affair**!