

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and thanks to all of you who donated gift cards to *Starbucks, Philz, Pete's Coffee and Jamba Juice* (we received a few of these!) as an expression of thanks to our Redwood City Police officers. Since the pandemic, our officers have taken the time to ensure that our campus is safe and secure. In addition to the cards, there were several notes of encouragement and support of our officers. Here at St. Pius we are blessed to have several police officers, deputy sheriffs, firefighters, EMT's and other first responders as members of our parish family. This morning the Archbishop will be celebrating a special "Blue Mass" in support of the police agencies within the archdiocese as well as other "front-liners." It is important to acknowledge the very fine work and dedication exhibited by the vast majority of our public servants who work each day on the front lines to protect us!

Congratulations to those who have recently received sacraments here at St. Pius X. Parishioners Jesse Ruiz and Lidia Arzate were married here yesterday. We congratulate them and bless them as they begin their married life together. I am grateful to Fr. Edgardo, Nancy Powell and Mary Chacon who have worked together with Jesse and Lidia in preparation of this wonderful milestone!! Last Sunday, Gregory Bronzini received his First Holy Communion at the 9:30 Mass. This Mass was extra special as we celebrated the solemnity Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (Co-patron of our Archdiocese) and the installation of our school student leaders. I want to thank Gregory's parents for their example and support of their son in his spiritual formation. It is important to celebrate our sacramental life as a community, as it confirms that we are all members of the Body of Christ, and I know our children and young people appreciate the affirmation and support they receive from our parish community. Today at the 9:30, 3 more children will be receiving their First Holy Communion. Congratulations to them, their parents and families as well as their teachers who have prepared our children for this important sacrament. Thanks as well to Father Coleman, the celebrant of the 9:30 Mass, who will perform the sacrament of First Holy Communion.

It is fitting that we celebrate the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Matrimony in light of today's Gospel reading from Matthew. These sacraments are celebrated with great anticipation and joy. There is a pervasive spirit of hope and excitement as families and friends, and indeed the whole Catholic community united by Baptism in prayer, gather to celebrate these milestones. Indeed, there are some obvious similarities. Children dress up in gowns and suits and ties, a reflection of both the solemnity and joy of this sacrament; we have the same idea with the wedding dress and formal wear. There is also the celebration of a meal or banquet after the reception of these sacraments. Thus, it is not incidental that Jesus uses the metaphor or example of a wedding banquet to describe the kingdom of heaven. Jesus often prefaced his stories with "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to...". This was done so that the hearer could grasp in relatable and uncomplicated terms what Jesus was communicating to them.

Wedding invitations are often coveted and people anticipate receiving them. How many times have people been disappointed to NOT be invited to a wedding? As we all know, one of the most difficult aspects of planning a wedding is the invitation list. It can be a source of anxiety and hard feelings. So, imagine a king hosting a wedding banquet for his son and invited guests don't show up. Even more egregious, they find excuses to avoid going. The importance of the wedding feast is clearly expressed this way: "The setting is a wedding feast prepared by a king for his son. One can hardly imagine a happier occasion than a marriage celebration. In biblical times, this was an opportunity for family, friends, and even whole villages to set aside the drudgery of daily duties for several days of feasting and merriment. Here the Father is the king who wants us to celebrate the coming of his Son with a marriage banquet. Jesus hinted at this earlier when he justified his feasting by referring to himself as a 'bridegroom'": [The Gospel of Matthew, Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture].

God invites us to be in relationship with Him. This is expressed for us in our Catholic identity given to us at Baptism. As Catholics, we accept the invitation of Jesus the bridegroom to celebrate the Eucharist, this ultimate feast. Yet, like those first invited to the wedding feast, there are times when we avoid the invitation; we find other things to fill up our time. Yet, it is important to reflect upon-even if it is uncomfortable and challenging-how important attending Mass, availing ourselves of the sacraments, especially Confession or Reconciliation, is to that relationship. God invites us to share in the fullness of the kingdom of heaven which is both a privilege and profound source of grace. Indeed, coming to the banquet is life-changing and transformative. It gives context to all we are and do; ultimately, it prepares us to share in God's glory in heaven.

“The final verse captures the message of the parable in a short maxim. Many are invited, Jesus says, but few are chosen. The point is that all are called to the kingdom, but not all will be found worthy to possess it. Some will decline the invitation and so exclude themselves from its blessings; others will accept it but not follow through in putting its demands into practice. Those found acceptable are those committed to directing their lives by the gospel. They clothe themselves in the garments of true repentance and Christlike righteousness.” [Ibid., Mitch & Sri].

One final note...the solar panel project has begun!! The planning for this effort has been painstaking over the past few years. I want to thank in a very special way Father Paul Rossi who inspired this effort; John Philpott and Judy Giacometti who have done the bulk of heavy lifting in attention to many details; our Parish and Finance Councils who supported this investment, and you, the people of St. Pius X, whose financial support and generosity has made this step into the future possible! Thanks also to Christina McTaggart from the City of Redwood City for her crucial support!

Fr. Tom