

## TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

Fr. Max Oliva, S.J.

October 11, 2020

“The Mountain of the Lord”

The two themes that caught my eye in the readings for today are: the mountain of the Lord (in the 25th Chapter of Isaiah) and being well fed spiritually by the loving providence of God.

I will begin with a reflection by Bishop Robert Barron:

“The holy mountain is an extraordinarily powerful spiritual metaphor in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. This mountain is presented as rising above the surrounding mountains, and all of the tribes of Israel are depicted as streaming toward it. This is Mount Zion, where the Temple is located; its supremacy is meant to symbolize the unsurpassable importance of worshipping the Lord.

In the eleventh chapter, Isaiah shows us the holy mountain again, this time as a place of peace and reconciliation, where *lion and lamb lie down together* and where *the child plays by the adder’s lair*. The point is that worshipping the Lord brings all people, indeed all creation, together.”

In today’s reading, from the twenty-fifth chapter, the prophet revisits the holy mountain, portraying it now as a place of *rich food and choice wines*, where the Lord feeds his hungry people.

Mountains are mentioned frequently in the Bible because they dotted the landscape where the stories in the Bible take place. They have a religious symbolism for both Jewish and Christian peoples because they are closer to God - who is seen as dwelling in the heavens above.

Mountains played a significant role in Jesus’ life: He often went up to the mountain to pray; he gave us spiritual food on the Mount of Beatitudes in his Sermon on the Mount; Mount Tabor is the scene of his transfiguration; and the Mount of Olives – it was at the foot of this mountain that held the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed before his crucifixion.

Mountains played a significant role in my spiritual journey when I was living in San Diego - giving parish missions and working part-time in a parish in Tijuana. I was living in a Diocesan parish and although the pastor and his associate were good men, I found it difficult at times not living with Jesuits. One day while I was praying about my life, I was given four images of God’s protective love:

I am the little island at Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe, surrounded by mountains.

I am the desert floor near Mount Laguna, San Diego County.

I am a picturesque valley with mountains on all sides.

I am a meadow with mountains all around it.

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I took photos of the four places. They are in my room at Bea House and still give me consolation and comfort when I look at them.

Have mountains, or one in particular, inspired you at some time in your life?

What was the message?

II

*“rich food and choice wines” – “juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines” – God will provide for those who believe. God “spreads the table before me, anoints my head with oil, my cup overflows” (Psalm 23).*

*“Behold, I have prepared my banquet,”* words from the parable in today’s Gospel. Here the end time is seen as a wedding banquet. The twofold sending of servants has to do with their responses. The first is a simple refusal. The second, characterized by indifference and maltreatment, aggravates the situation and is more serious than the first. According to Scripture scholar, Roland Faley, the two groups refer to Christian missionaries sent to their Jewish contemporaries whose attitude worsens with time. The wedding garment symbolizes the quality of an active Christian faith.

In God’s banquet hall, all of us have a place. At the Eucharist, food for our soul, all are welcome regardless of color, nationality, economic status, or political persuasion. God does not discriminate!

#### CONCLUDING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, here you led us  
Within your holiest place,  
And here yourself have fed us  
With treasures of your grace,  
And you have freely given  
What earth could never buy,  
The bread of life from heaven,  
That we may never die.”*

**AMEN.**

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