

Here we are, in the first week of Advent. And in today's reading from the Prophet Isaiah, we hear about what is called the eschatological banquet.

Eschatology is the study of the last things. The Greek word εσχάτος means "*the very last in the order of time*" ... in other words, what we would call "*the end times.*"

The eschatological banquet - or the banquet at the end of time - is the banquet of the Messiah. Nothing is missing, and everything is available to eat. Sort of a cosmic "*all you can eat*" buffet.

And if that's not enough, we see an end to division and misunderstanding ... or "*the veil that veils all peoples*" ... and an end to conflict and manipulation... or "*web that is woven over all nations*" ... and the destruction of the "*last thing to end all last things*" ... that is, an end to death itself.

Not only that, but Isaiah also prophesies that the Lord will remove the "*reproach of his people ... from the whole earth*" ... another way to translate 'reproach' is as 'shame' or 'disgrace.' In one sense, it can be understood as 'sin' ... but even more so, it should be seen as an end to the '*effects of sin.*'

None of these bad things ... not a single one ... will remain at the end of time ... this is the prophecy of Isaiah.

In the Gospel, we see how at the end of the text, Jesus feeds an entire crowd from a mere seven loaves and a few fish. This miracle is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet ... a preview of the last days ... a glimpse of life in the Kingdom of God

And as if that's not a big enough miracle in-and-of-itself, before this we hear that Jesus cured:

*the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others.*

The healing that Jesus brings about ... in a particular sense ... ends the '*reproach*' of these marginalized individuals. He takes away the '*effects of sin*' ... the '*imperfections*' that they experience in this present life ... and He does this as a sign that they are coming into the '*end of time*' or in other words, the Kingdom of God is at hand.

But, this isn't the *eschaton* ... and so, we don't see Jesus feeding the whole world, nor do we hear of Him healing the whole world.

Rather, the Presence of Christ in that place '*breaks in*' and allows a foretaste of eternity within that specific time and place. And so until we really do get to "*the*" '*end of time*' ... it is up to us to alleviate whatever hunger or suffering we are able to ... in our world ... as ambassadors for Christ.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... may this Eucharist be for us a living sign of the coming banquet of Heaven. Let us engage the graces of this Sacrament ... as Heaven breaks into Earth ... right here ... right now ... and let us feed our hungry souls ... and heal our wounded spirits. And then, refreshed by this Heavenly Food ... may we go forth from this place ... and bring the Kingdom of God to those we meet out in the world.