

Reading for the Memorial of St Bernard

20th August 2026

First reading

Ezekiel 36:23-28

‘I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.’

Thus says the Lord: I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 51(50):12-13. 14-15. 18-19. R12a

I will sprinkle clean water on you,

and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness.

Create a pure heart for me, O God; renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence; take not your holy spirit from me.

Restore in me the joy of your salvation; sustain in me a willing spirit.

I will teach transgressors your ways, that sinners may return to you.

For in sacrifice you take no delight; burnt offering from me would not please you.

My sacrifice to God, a broken spirit: a broken and humbled heart, you will not spurn, O God.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. Psalm 95(94):8a, 7c

Alleluia, alleluia.

Harden not your hearts today,

but listen to the voice of the Lord.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:1-14

‘Invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’

At that time: Jesus again spoke to the chief priests and the elders of the people, in parables, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ” But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, “The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you

find.” And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

‘But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, “Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

An invitation is not a command. We receive many invitations in life, either verbally or in writing and we probably ignore or decline a good number of them. We are free to accept an invitation or not. God’s way of relating to us is shaped more by invitation than by command. The parable Jesus speaks in the gospel is about God’s invitation to all of us to the banquet of life. In the story, the king who invites chosen guests to his son’s wedding banquet does not cancel the meal when those who were invited all refuse; instead he invites a whole new group. That aspect of the story speaks to us of God’s persistence. When the human response to God’s invitation is not forthcoming, God does not cancel anything; he simply intensifies his invitation. God continues to work to ensure that as many as possible approach the banquet of life, embodied in the person of Christ who is the bread of life. The second part of the parable reminds us that saying ‘yes’ to the God’s invitation is not a something we do once and then forget about. We have to say ‘yes’ to God’s invitation everyday day of our lives. In the language of the parable, we have to keep putting on the wedding garment. Having been clothed with Christ at baptism, we have to keep clothing ourselves with Christ and all he stands for, day by day.