



## *Reflection from Ben Babaran*

Today's Gospel from St. Matthew brings us back to banquets! Now the King, God Himself, is giving a banquet and those invited don't come to the banquet. "Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business." Jesus uses this image as an image of the Kingdom of God. We are all invited! Are we going to respond to the invitation of Jesus? God wants us.

The past month, especially the last two weeks, have been rough and difficult for our family. Jo's brother, Bon DeOcampo, who was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer last February, has been in and out of the ICU and the hospital. So, on September 30, Jo and I decided to go to Chicago to be with Bon and then be back the following day for the Goldenberg Duo benefit concert. But, concerned St. James parishioners conveyed the invitation to the banquet of life – suggesting that I stay longer with Bon celebrating his life! That, Jo and I accepted and had a wonderful time with our loved one. Those moments we shared with Bon were our last with him alive.

On October 10, 2023, Bon DeOcampo received the invitation to the heavenly banquet of Jesus. He did respond - leaving his LOVELY wife, a hard-working son, and a pregnant daughter about to deliver his first grandchild. The expected birthdate of the grandchild is Thanksgiving Day, November 23.

Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom of God comes in many forms. We are invited to love all without discriminating, to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others, to be of service to others. How do we respond?

*Peace,*

*Ben*