

## Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2011

The readings of this Sunday invite us to think about our eternal life. They try to describe to us what will happen when that time will come and how we can prepare ourselves for that day which will sanction the end of our life.

The first reading is a reflection on the virtue of Wisdom. The writer of this book personifies wisdom as a delightful and a loveable young lady. He assures us that those who possess wisdom will never be disappointed in what they undertake. Rather, wisdom will teach them the way of prudence and make them carefree.

In today's Gospel, the possession of wisdom is at the center of Jesus' parable. Jesus speaks of ten virgins, five of whom were wise and other five foolish. In fact, what made the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins Jesus is talking about was all about the way they behaved when facing such an important event of the waiting for the bridegroom who was to come at an unknown time.

The wise virgins, who took with them some reserve of oil, were happy enough to meet the bridegroom at the appointed time. The unwise ones, who forgot to take with them some reserve of oil, lost the opportunity to meet the bridegroom. When they came afterwards to the banquet hall and wanted to enter, the doors were locked and it was too late.

What do we learn from this parable? This parable teaches us something about the history of salvation. Historically speaking, this parable evokes the consequence of the unpreparedness of the Jewish people for the coming of the Messiah.

In fact, the Jewish people were chosen among all the nations of the earth. They had received from God a firm promise that at the appointed time he would send them a savior. But, when Jesus came in their midst, they were all surprised and hesitant to believe in him. Therefore, they missed the opportunity of sharing in the joy promised to them.

Positively, the parable teaches us something about the importance of preparedness. As a matter of fact, we very often forget that this world passes away and we, too, with it. We often live as though there is nothing happening around us. We act as though we did not hear the words of Jesus and his continual call to conversion. And yet, we have to be prepared anytime and at anything that can come our way. As Jesus says, "Stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour".

These words of Jesus have a sense of urgency. They are a warning to each one of us so that we may not live indifferently. If in this world, people have multiple plans just in case something bad was about to happen to them, how much more shall we be prepared! If Jesus was about to come back today, what would be our chance to meet him? What would be our plan B or C of rescue?

Because of that urgency, we have to act now and not delay what we can do today for our eternal salvation. In fact, in life there are things we can do now, today, and not tomorrow. Who knows if what we delay for today will come our way again? Who knows if the chance we miss today will be ours again tomorrow? This is a very tricky matter, because we do not know the day nor the hour.

The problem is a serious one, because it can also be late. In fact, there is always the temptation to think that we still have time to do things, that there is no need for rushing things. This is the case, especially of those who are still young or those who are in good health. This temptation is big, because there is a danger of transposing on a spiritual level what we do in social life. It is easy to say, “I take my time”; “I will think about it”, “I will do it at the appropriate time”. But, how do you know that you will really have time tomorrow or after tomorrow?

Another lesson we learn from today’s Gospel is about accountability. In fact, it is striking and even shocking to realize that the wise virgins who brought some reserve of oil with them did not want at all to share with those who were in need, and thereby, in a critical condition.

The point of this episode is not intended to teach us selfishness, so that we may say that we don’t have enough and therefore we cannot share. But rather it is to remind us,, that we are accountable for our life and our acts. Negligence on our part will never be supplied by the goodness of others when it is about eternal life. That is why it is impossible to claim salvation out of the merits of our ancestors, the Christian background of our family, or the respectful past of our acquaintances, etc. We are all responsible and should assume the consequence of our acts.

In that perspective, the oil that the wise virgins brought and the foolish did not bring symbolizes the good acts we have to produce while we are still in this time of the waiting of the coming of the Lord. This time in the waiting should be put to good use so that when the Lord comes back he might find us ready and well prepared to welcome him.

The symbol of oil reminds us also that our acts on earth will follow us in the other world. If we have the good ones, they will stay with us and allow us to be accepted in God’s kingdom. If we have none, it will be problematic for us because we will have nothing to claim or something to hook on in order to be accepted in God’s kingdom.

In this time of waiting, let us pray that God may give us the grace of faithfulness to his Son Jesus. Let us ask Jesus to give us the courage to produce good acts while we are still on earth so that they might survive us in the world to come. May God bless you all!

**Wisdom 6: 12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18; Matthew 25: 1-13**



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