

32nd (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Behold come out to meet Him! A wedding was a major community event in the time of Jesus and lasted for days. Traditionally, a Jewish wedding feast takes place at nightfall. While the guests are entertained at the home of the bride's parents, the coming of the bridegroom is announced repeatedly. Finally after a long delay the bridegroom arrives toward midnight to pick up the bride. The virgins light up the festive procession to the bridegroom's house, where they will dance till their torches burn out. In today's parable the stars of the show were not the bride and the groom but the bridesmaids. Five of them are foolish and five of them are wise. Being foolish or wise is not a question of having a high or low IQ. Rather, it refers to the virgin's *foresight* or *the lack of it* in view of the fact that nobody knew what time the bridegroom would come. The refusal of the wise bridesmaids to share their oil is reasonable; they may not have enough to last till the end of the celebration.

Jesus used this image to teach the people about his coming at the end of time. It will catch people by surprise. In life, *certain things cannot be borrowed or shared*. Our relationship with God is a perfect example - we must have it for ourselves. We cannot ask others to work for our salvation nor let them love God for us. Moreover, some things cannot be obtained or done at the last minute. We cannot forever delay about preparing for our encounter with God. On our deathbed it may be too late. Jesus points to the critical importance of the present as a time of readiness for his second coming. He insists that it is necessary "*to be ready.*" For him there is a need for constant spiritual vigilance. Precisely because the hour is uncertain, we must be ready at every moment. There will be no last minute warning. *If Jesus' second coming were to take place an hour from now, how prepared are you?* Jesus will come and ask us for an accounting of our life. The wise prepare for it ahead of time. The foolish are those who *do not think of the*

future—they miss opportunities given them. They think that conversion is always possible at the last moment, or that they can always rely on others to rescue them from their predicament. *“Do not wait for the hearse to take you to the church.”* Think of this: *when we waste our time we also waste ourselves.*

As followers of Christ we must not be so preoccupied with the cares of the world and the pursuit of riches that we become dead to God’s word. The coming of Jesus, at a moment least expected, should find us ready. Today He is advising us: *“Keep your eyes open, for you do not know the day or the hour when the Lord will come,”* in other words, we should constantly be preparing for His coming. How? **First, vigilance**, being ready for His coming at the midnight of our lives or when we die. The day of our death is not a day of doom. Rather, it is the day of joy because we can see God face to face. **Second, be attentive and discerning.** *Some of us are old enough to make our own decisions... but not young enough to remember what we decided!* Remember, Jesus comes into our everyday lives. As Albert Camus said, *“Don’t wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day.”* Jesus comes to us *in the things we do, in what happens to us and in the people we meet.* **Third, mindfulness and constancy.** To be wise is not just about being careful and ready for any situation. As the 1st reading puts it, *“For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care...”* So to be wise is to be watchful and to be ready for the unexpected. To be watchful is more than timing and also more than watching so that we will not get caught. To be watchful is to do good all the time whether somebody is watching us or not; whether or not we will be punished or rewarded. **Fourth, prayer and work.** Praying doesn’t mean that we neglect our work and play, but rather that we pause occasionally to pay attention to the Lord and keep His light constantly shining in our lives—making sure that His light is burning with the oil of prayer and good works.

Finally, salvation is not only a matter of me being ready and saved, but above all, it should be shared towards my brothers and sisters. Just like the role of the bridesmaid is to accompany the bride. This, too, is our role and calling: *to accompany one another*. We are bridesmaids to our parents, our family, spouses, our children, our friends and to everyone. Do not worry - the Lord always stands by us. **Let us open our eyes, mind and heart that we may recognize the complacency and carelessness in our spiritual life and in our relationship with God. Let us listen and pay attention to what He wills for us and what others are wanting from us. When we do all these the end will not catch us unprepared, and we shall join the Lord in the everlasting marriage feast of heaven. Amen.**