

12 November 2017 (32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Wisdom 6:12-16; Psalm 62(63):2-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13.

Be prepared; stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour!

Another parable and another wedding feast! We are introduced to ten maidens waiting for the return of the bridegroom. As part of the wedding, the bridegroom had to go and enter into an agreement with the bride's father, before he could take the bride with him to his home. The role of the ten maidens was to accompany the bridegroom and his new bride into his home where the celebrations could then begin.

Jesus tells us that whilst five of the maidens were wise enough to plan head for the eventuality that the bridegroom may be delayed, and took with them flasks with extra oil for their lamps, the other five were foolish and did not take any extra oil. When it was announced that the bridegroom was close, the ten maidens woke up and prepared their lamps. The wise maidens topped up their lamps with oil from their flasks but the foolish ones had none left. Wisely the maidens refused to share their extra oil because they would have risked not having enough themselves – this parable is not about love of neighbour but about being prepared!

The return of the bridegroom is clearly a reference to the return of the Son of Man at the end of times. At the moment of our death we will meet the Lord face to face. Like the maidens we are invited to be vigilant and wait for this coming. We are asked to stay awake, alert and prepared since we do not know the day or the hour when this will happen in our life. We only know that it will surely happen for all of us.

The foolish maidens were not admitted into the wedding feast because they were not at their place when the bridegroom arrived; we would not want to be caught out like them! Our job is to make sure we have enough oil in our flasks. Perhaps one question we could ask is what does this oil represent?

In our Baptism we are given a burning candle and we are invited to keep this candle burning until the end. This burning candle represents the flame of our faith which needs to be kept burning in order to enlighten our life with the light of Christ. We need to make sure that this flame continues to burn brightly as on the day of our Baptism.

The oil represents my good works and my acts of charity. Our faith is strengthened when it leads us to reach out in loving mercy to our sisters and brothers in need. If we do not protect the flame of our faith, then we too may be found lacking at the time of the bridegroom's arrival.

Hence Jesus' appeal: be prepared, stay alert and awake, so that you too can enter into the wedding feast with the bridegroom.

Fr Mario