

The Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Ten Virgins)

November 8, 2020

Every November, this time of year, as the Church year draws to the end this liturgical calendar of year A. We begin hearing all readings that focus more on the coming of Lord at the end-time. In the gospel of this Sunday Jesus tells the familiar parable of the kingdom of heaven with ten virgins which is unique to Matthew's gospel, to teaches us how best to be vigilant and prepared at all times for the coming of the Lord into our lives. These ten virgins or bridesmaids, five of them were foolish and the other five were wise who are watching and waiting for the return of the bridegroom.

Talking about wedding celebration, every country has its own culture, custom, ritual, and tradition of wedding celebration or wedding ceremony. We do not know much about wedding celebration in the Middle East, but according to the book entitled "The Parables of Jesus," published in 1972 by *Joachim Jeremias*. The wedding in the Middle East might be celebrated for several days. The celebration began with welcoming guests, dancing, and entertainment. The climax of the wedding celebration was to wait the arrival of the bridegroom and procession. It would take place at middle of midnight. The bridegroom would take the bride in her home and then the procession would go to the house of the father of the bridegroom. The ritual wedding requires the bridesmaids with the torches to escort the bridegroom to the wedding celebration. But in this parable, the bridegroom comes late because it was long delay and all of the ten bridesmaids became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, suddenly the bridegroom returned and they were asked to come out to meet him. The five wise virgins prepared enough to bring extra oil for their lamps. However, the five foolish virgins did not prepare extra oil for their lamps so their lamps begin to dim, and they are going to run out of oil. They ask the five wise virgins to give them some of oil for their lamps are going out, but they were refused. The refusal of the five wise virgins was reasonable because there may not be enough oil for all of them. If the wise virgins shared some of their oil with five foolish virgins and they may not have enough oil for the procession until they arrive at the house of the father's bridegroom. These five foolish virgins who were not ready for their master' coming and they had to go to the merchants and buy some for themselves. And they missed the wedding reception because while they went off to buy oil, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked and these five foolish were left out side.

What Jesus tells us in this parable is: "*Stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Lord will come.*" Jesus tells us to always do our best to live a good life so that we will always be ready for heaven. In other words, we should stay awake; ready ourselves for the time the lord will come again. Jesus wants to make it clear that a time will come and each person is either welcomed to heaven or finds the doors barred before them. He wants to warn us so that no one gets left out.

The Gospel's message is very clear that we are supposed to be alert and prepared when Christ comes in everyday of our lives. He comes to us in the things we do, in what happens to us and in the people we meet. Preparedness is a good thing, but not a matter of waiting till the last minute. So we must make ourselves a little ready everyday for the coming of the Lord in our everyday lives.

We are challenged by this reading to ask ourselves: *What are of our lamps or our oil?* Remember at baptism we received the flame (light) of lamp as the gift of faith or perhaps the grace of the membership in the Church. We then kept our lamp burning brightly with our own supply of oil. We could call this kind of oil is our faith or the Spirit or the grace of God, or living a good life. Whatever it is, it's something that we can't borrow from a friend. We can borrow money, car and something from someone but we cannot borrow oil of faith from them. The oil represents something unable to share. Something is entirely personal. We have to be prepared with our own supply by having a deep and sincere relationship with Jesus Christ as well as doing our best to live a good life here on earth so that we will always be ready for heaven. Just like the virgins with the lighted lamps. They had filled their lamps with oil, they were waiting with readiness and excitement.

This parable of the kingdom of heaven gives us with hope that anyone can be welcomed by Jesus, the Bridegroom, as long as we are alert, awake, and well supplied with the oil of salvation by making sure that we have all things we need to provide extra light when the power goes out. As we continue to attend the rich banquet at the Lord's Table and receive the Holy Eucharist which will satisfy our souls. Let us ask God help us to keep our faith alive every single day by staying alert and keeping our lamps aflame, maintaining a good supply of oil. So we will eagerly welcome the arrival of the Lord in our everyday lives and prepare for his coming at the end of time. Amen.