

# Sunday Message

32<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 12 November 2023 • Psalter Week 4



## BE PREPARED MATTHEW 25:1-13

Jewish wedding ceremonies in the time of Jesus began in the evening. The families and guests formed a procession to accompany the couple from the bride's family home to her new home with her husband's family. As they drew near, the women members of the groom's family formed a torch-lit procession of welcome.

In the parable in today's Gospel, ten girls were to form this procession but only five had thought of bringing oil, so the procession was unlikely to be a resounding success. The wedding suffers another setback: there is a delay in getting proceedings under way, and the girls get tired and fall asleep. Suddenly, towards midnight, word comes that the procession is finally on its way. There is a frantic flurry of activity as the girls form their procession, only to discover that half of the lamps won't light. If they try to stretch out the oil supply enough for five lamps to provide for twice that number, there is every danger the procession will be plunged into darkness after a few minutes. If that happened, the couple and their families would be the laughing stock of the neighbourhood. Instead, the five are sent off to find an oil shop, an unlikely prospect so late at night.

Despite these rather chaotic beginnings, the wedding gets underway. When the five girls return from their frantic shopping expedition, the groom refuses to open the door to them, saying he does not know them.

For Matthew, wedding banquets are an image of the kingdom of heaven. What he is saying is that we do not know when the Messiah will return, any more than the girls knew when the bridegroom would come. The girls represent the Christian community waiting for the Messiah's return. Matthew divides them into 'wise and foolish.' He is using them to make one of his favourite points. The time between the resurrection and the return of the Son of Man is not 'empty time.' It is an opportunity for the followers of Jesus to prove they are his genuine disciples by devoting themselves to good works. That time is now. Like the wise bridesmaids, we must stand ready, with our lamps lit. We must not be caught unprepared. ■

### SAY

"Lord, help me to be ever prepared for your coming. Amen."

### PRAY

Today's first reading speaks of the importance of wisdom. Pray for the gift of wisdom, so that you will know what is truly important and what is not.

### LEARN

The Christian must be ready for the Messiah when he comes in judgement at the end of time. If he does not find us ready, all he can say to us is "I do not know you." Like the wise bridesmaids, we must be faithful witnesses to our vocation, people who live by Christian values of justice, peace and love.

### DO

Make an examination of conscience. Are you living in such a way that you are ready to meet the Lord whenever he calls you?

## REFLECT

In November 1962, Pope John XXIII received some very bad news. His doctors informed him that he had cancer and that it was inoperable. He had only a few months left to live.

It must have come as a tremendous disappointment to Pope John because there was still so much he wanted to do. Only a few weeks before, he had opened the first session of the Second Vatican Council, the great meeting of the world's bishops that he had summoned to examine Church teaching and practice and consider the Church's place in the world. Now, he knew he wouldn't be around to guide the Council

or to witness its conclusions. He would be gone before its vital work would be finished. But Pope John's response displayed none of that disappointment or any anxiety about the prospect of death. "A tumour," he replied. "Very well, let God's will be done. But don't worry about me because my bags are packed. I'm ready to go." And there's no doubt that his bags were packed and he was ready to go.

In the Gospel story, the five foolish bridesmaids allowed the oil in their lamps to run out. The wedding was delayed and they hadn't brought enough oil to keep their lamps lit, unlike the five wise bridesmaids who had brought sufficient oil. When the ceremony

eventually got under way, the foolish ones were not allowed to participate in the celebration; they were left outside the door.

The ten bridesmaids represent us - the Christian community - waiting for the Messiah's return. Some are wise and some are foolish; some are prepared for his coming and some are not, some have their lamps lit, others have not. The point is that, like the wise bridesmaids, we must be always prepared, alert, ready for when the bridegroom will come. Like Good Pope John, we must have our bags packed, our lamps lit, for we do not know the day or the hour. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Let my prayer come into your presence.  
Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty and merciful God,  
graciously keep from us all adversity,  
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,  
we may pursue in freedom of heart  
the things that are yours.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Wisdom 6:12-16

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.  
Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she  
makes herself known to them.  
Watch for her early and you will have no  
trouble;  
you will find her sitting at your gates.  
Even to think about her is understanding fully  
grown;  
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly  
leave you.  
She herself walks about looking for those  
who are worthy of her  
and graciously shows herself to them as they  
go,  
in every thought of theirs coming to meet  
them.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psslm 62

Response:

For you my soul is thirsting, O God, my God.

- O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)
- So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.  
For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)

- So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)
- On you I muse through the night  
for you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

(For shorter form read between ><

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14>)

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the  
Thessalonians.

>We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about  
those who have died, to make sure that you do  
not grieve about them, like the other people who  
have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and  
rose again, and that it will be the same for those  
who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with  
him. <We can tell you this from the Lord's own  
teaching, that any of us who are left alive until  
the Lord's coming will not have any advantage  
over those who have died. At the trumpet of  
God, the voice of the archangel will call out the  
command and the Lord himself will come down  
from heaven; those who have died in Christ will  
be the first to rise, and then those of us who are  
still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together  
with them; to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall  
stay with the Lord for ever. With such thoughts as  
these you should comfort one another.

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia! Stay awake and stand  
ready,  
because you do not know the hour when the  
Son of Man is coming. Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 25:1-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Matthew.

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The  
kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten  
bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet  
the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and  
five were sensible: the foolish ones did take  
their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the  
sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their  
lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all  
grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there  
was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and  
meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke  
up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones  
said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your  
oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied,  
"There may not be enough for us and for you; you  
had better go to those who sell it and buy some  
for yourselves." They had gone off to buy it when  
the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready  
went in with him to the wedding hall and the door  
was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later.  
"Lord, Lord," they said "open the door for us."  
But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know  
you." So stay awake, because you do not know  
either the day or the hour.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Look with favour, we pray, O Lord,  
upon the sacrificial gifts offered here,  
that, celebrating in mystery the Passion of  
your Son,  
we may honour it with loving devotion.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I  
shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures where he  
gives me repose,  
near restful waters he leads me.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Nourished by this sacred gift, O Lord,  
we give you thanks and beseech your mercy,  
that, by the pouring forth of your Spirit,  
the grace of integrity may endure  
in those your heavenly power has entered.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.