



SUNDAY GOSPEL

Being Prepared

MATTHEW 25:1-13

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



Five of Them Were Wise by Walter Rane

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.' ■

A WORD FROM
POPE FRANCIS

The Biblical Readings of this Sunday's Liturgy invite us to extend the reflection on eternal life that we began on the occasion of

the commemoration of the faithful departed (November 2, All Souls' Day). On this point there is a clear difference between those who believe and those who do not believe or, one might likewise say, between those who hope and those who do not hope.

Indeed, St Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "but we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may

not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13). Faith in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ in this sphere too is a crucial divide. St Paul always reminded the Christians of Ephesus that before accepting the Good News they had been "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). Indeed, the religion of the Greeks, the pagan cults and myths, were unable to shed light on the mystery of death; thus an ancient inscription said: "In nihil ab nihilo quam cito recidimus" which means: "how quickly we fall back from nothing to nothing". If we remove God, we remove Christ and the world falls back into emptiness

and darkness. Moreover, this is also confirmed in the expressions of contemporary nihilism that is often unconscious and, unfortunately, infects a great many young people.

Today's Gospel is a famous parable that speaks of ten maidens invited to a wedding feast, a symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven and of eternal life (Mt 25:1-13). It is a happy image with which, however, Jesus teaches a truth that calls us into question. In fact five of those 10 maidens were admitted to the feast because when the bridegroom arrived they had brought the oil to light their lamps, whereas the other five were left outside because they had been foolish enough not to bring any.

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What is represented by this “oil”, the indispensable prerequisite for being admitted to the nuptial banquet?

St Augustine (cf. Discourses 93, 4), and other ancient authors interpreted it as a symbol of love that one cannot purchase but receives as a gift, preserves within one and uses in works. True wisdom is making the most of mortal life in order to do

works of mercy, for after death this will no longer be possible. When we are reawoken for the Last Judgement, it will be made on the basis of the love we have shown in our earthly life (cf. Mt 25:31-46). And this love is a gift of Christ, poured out in us by the Holy Spirit. Those who believe in God-Love bear within them invincible hope, like a lamp to light them on their way through the night beyond death to arrive at the great feast of life.

Let us ask Mary, to teach us true wisdom, the wisdom that became flesh in Jesus. He is the Way that leads from this life to God, to the Eternal One. He enabled us to know the Father’s face, and thus gave us hope full of love. This is why the Church addresses the Mother of the Lord with these words: “Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra” [our life, our sweetness and our hope]. Let us learn from her to live and die in the hope that never disappoints. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. In the parable in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells us that all the bridesmaids became drowsy and fell asleep. In your faith, have you experienced this feeling? Pope Francis talks about ways we can wake up. What has this looked like in your life?
2. Pope Francis tells us that nihilism – the idea that life is meaningless – infects a great many young people. In the metaphor of the lamp, the trimmed wick draws oil so the light is bright which then gives light to the whole house. How can we be a light for those who feel they are in darkness?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Each Other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Response: *Lord, help us to stay awake.
We are waiting for you.*

Reflect: At the return of the Bridegroom, the bridesmaids trimmed the wick of their candle, cutting away that which was burned and used up. Ask the Holy Spirit now to show you what needs trimming in your life so that your light shines brightly.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, Bridegroom of your Church, you tell us that you are coming quickly. Please give us the grace to be found awake, waiting for you, ready to return with you to your Father’s house. You say, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus! Amen (Revelations 20).