

GOSPEL

*Matthew 25:1-13**

Jesus spoke 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.’

**Note: There are 12 possible Gospels for this Feast.*

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

2 November 2008

Yesterday the feast of All Saints brought us to contemplate "your holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother" (Preface, All Saints). Today, with our heart still turned toward this ultimate reality, we commemorate all of the faithful departed, who have "gone before us marked with the sign of faith and... who sleep in Christ" (Eucharistic Prayer I). It is very important that we Christians live a relationship of the truth of the faith with the deceased and that we view death and the afterlife in the light of Revelation. Already the Apostle Paul, writing to the first communities, exhorted the faithful to "not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since", he wrote, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thes 4: 13-14). Today too, it is necessary to evangelise about the reality of death and eternal life, realities particularly subject to superstitious beliefs and

syncretisms, so that the Christian truth does not risk mixing itself with myths of various types.

In my Encyclical on Christian hope, I questioned myself about the mystery of eternal life (cf. *Spe salvi*, 10-12). I asked myself: "Is the Christian faith a hope that transforms and sustains the lives of people still today?" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 10). And more radically: "Do men and women of our time still long for eternal life? Or has earthly existence perhaps become their only horizon?" In reality, as St Augustine had already observed, all of us want a "blessed life", happiness. We rarely know what it is like or how it will be, but we feel attracted to it. This is a universal hope, common to men and women of all times and all places. The expression "eternal life" aims to give a name to this irrepressible longing; it is not an unending succession of days, but an immersion of oneself in the ocean of infinite love, in which time, before and after, no longer exists. A fullness of life and of joy: it is this that we hope and await from our being with Christ (cf. *ibid.*, 12).

Today we renew the hope in eternal life, truly founded on Christ's death and Resurrection. "I am risen and I am with you always", the Lord tells us, and my hand supports you. Wherever you may fall, you will fall into my hands and I will be there even to the gates of death. Where no one can accompany you any longer and where you can take nothing with you, there I will wait for you to transform for you the darkness into light. Christian hope, however, is not solely individual, it is also always a hope for others. Our lives are profoundly linked, one to the other, and the good and the bad that each of us does always affects others too. Hence, the prayer of a pilgrim soul in the world can help another soul that is being purified after death. This is why the Church invites us today to pray for our beloved deceased and to pause at their tombs in the cemeteries. Mary, Star of Hope, renders our faith in eternal life stronger and more authentic, and supports our prayer of suffrage for our deceased brethren.

continued over page ►

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does Jesus' parable of the bridesmaids teach us about living with readiness for eternal life, and how does Pope Benedict remind us that Christian hope looks beyond this world's horizon?



Heart: How do you experience the longing for "a blessed life" that Pope Benedict describes — that deep desire to be immersed in God's infinite love?



Hands: What simple act of remembrance or prayer could you offer this week — for someone who has died or for someone who feels without hope — as a sign of your faith in the life to come?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.