

Lighting Our Lamps

*A Missionary Commentary on the
Sunday Readings*

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 6:12-16

Psalms 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or 4:13-14

Matthew 25:1-13

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

This Sunday's Gospel describes for us how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus' "kingdom parable" of the ten virgins is drawn from the customary wedding practices in Palestine. The bridesmaids were tasked with receiving and accompanying the bridegroom to the wedding festivities. It was customary to celebrate it at night; thus, the bridesmaids had to be equipped with lamps.

We all know well the parable of the ten virgins; five were wise and five were foolish. The foolish did not bring along any additional oil. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all fell asleep. At midnight the bridegroom came; the wise went in with him to the banquet. The foolish were late and missed their opportunity; they remained outside.

Pope Francis asks: "What does Jesus want to teach us with this parable?" He reminds us that we must be ready for our encounter with Him. Francis tells us that to watch does not mean only not to sleep, but to be ready. In fact, all the virgins slept before the bridegroom's arrival; however, when they awakened, only some were ready. Here, therefore, is the meaning of being wise and prudent. It is about not waiting for the last moment of our life to collaborate with God's grace, to engage in mission. Let us reflect: one day will be my last; if it were today, am I prepared?

Francis writes: "The lamp is the symbol of the faith that illumines our life, while the oil is the symbol of the charity that nourishes, makes fruitful and credible the light of faith. The condition to be ready for the encounter with the Lord is not only faith, but also a Christian life rich in love and charity for our neighbor."

The Pope continues: "If we let ourselves be guided by what seems to us more comfortable, by the pursuit of our interests, our life becomes sterile, incapable of giving life to others, and we don't accumulate any oil stock for the lamp of our faith. And, the latter—faith—will go out at the moment of the Lord's coming, or even before."

However, Francis asserts: "If we are vigilant and we seek to do good, with gestures of love, of sharing, of service to our neighbor in difficulty, we can remain at peace while we await the coming of the bridegroom. The Lord can come at any moment, and even the

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sleep of death does not scare us, because we have the reserve of oil, accumulated with the good works of every day. Faith inspires charity; charity guards faith.”

During this month of all saints and all souls, we pray: May they help us to make our faith ever more operative through active charity and missionary engagement. Friends, let us belong to the “wise” with lighted lamps and an abundant supply of oil!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

All through life, we are encouraged to seek wisdom; those who actively search for God’s wisdom are assured that they will find it.

Psalm 63

This psalm expresses our search, our thirst, for God alone, for he is the true fulfillment of our desires and dreams.

Second Reading

Saint Paul assures the Thessalonians that all those who have fallen asleep believing in Christ will definitely rise with him.

Gospel

Our Gospel today and for the next two Sundays (the last three weeks of the liturgical year) are all drawn from chapter 25 of Matthew’s Gospel, which is Jesus’ sermon on the end of time, instructing us on how to wisely prepare for the certain end of life.

*Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James Kroeger,
who recently published [*Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language*](#) (Orbis Books – 2023).*

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