

## The Thirty Second Sunday Of Ordinary Time, Cycle A 2023

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, the readings emphasize the return of the king, Jesus, and a day of judgment. In the second reading, the Thessalonians had expected the early return of Jesus. Since they had expected him to return within their lifetime, they were concerned about the fate of their members who had died ( "Fallen asleep") before Christ's return. St Paul reassured them that those who had "fallen asleep" would be the first to be taken up into heaven.

Using the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus tells us that moral of the parable is "To stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour" of the bridegroom's return. Jesus is the bridegroom and the church (the community) is the bride of Christ. Jesus is warning his disciples to be prepared at all times. The oil is the love that enables us to continually produce acts of mercy and kindness. Unless that oil is being constantly being refilled by the sacraments, the harshness and bitterness of life will use up all of it and we will run out of oil. These acts are living examples of Christ's love for humanity and bring hope to those in despair. Why the bridegroom was delayed is not relevant to the main point of the story. "They have to be vigilant with their Christian prayers and duties". However, the Bridegroom could have been delayed because of a sandstorm, or prolonged negotiations with the bride's family. I doubt that there was a store that was open 24 hours a day, where the foolish virgins could have bought oil. One could also ask whether the wise virgins was so cautious that they were selfish for refusing to share. Again, the main point of the parable is: Are we ready to account for our lives before God?

The Thessalonians were expecting Jesus to return soon, For us, because almost 2000 years have gone by and Jesus is

yet to return Jesus, we can become complacent and believe that we have all the time in the world to put our spiritual lives in order.

What do we believe? Catholics, unlike some other Christians do not believe that we shall ever see the return of Jesus in our lifetime.. Worse yet, we believe that death is unnatural. With healthy habits, exercise and good medical treatment we can live indefinitely. We shall put our spiritual lives in order if or when we think that death is near.

Not all illnesses like a heart attack , give us time to put our spiritual lives in order. Death can also happen unexpectedly like car accidents or natural disasters

Do not wait until death is at your doorstep, before you seek the sacrament of reconciliation. Since God's forgiveness is conditional upon us forgiving those who have offended us, we would need time to let go of our past hurts.

If we have to make amends to others for the wrongs we have committed against them, we would require lots of time. If we wish to enter into the wedding feast, the heavenly banquet, in heaven, we have to ready today, for we know not the day or the hour.