

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
31ST ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle A – November 8, 2020



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *My soul is thirsting for you, O lord, my God.*

All: **For your kindness is a greater good than life; my lips shall glorify you.**

Leader: *You are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.*

All: **My soul is thirsting for you, O lord, my God.**

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

FIRST READING [Wisdom 6 (12-16)]

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire; Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find her sitting by his gate.

For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil

shall quickly be free from care; because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,

and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solicitude.

Wisdom is pictured as a woman to be sought out and loved. In other books of the Bible we also find personifications of Wisdom, such as: Proverbs 1 (20-23); 8 (1-36); 9 (1-6). In fact, it is more or less what in many times we do with God; in order to better understand him we represent him as another person, and we even imagine him as an old man with beard and sitting on a throne. So, this image attributed to Wisdom is a graphic way of representing a part of God, since Wisdom in this context can be understood as a manifestation of God.

The author of this book insists on the ease with which the just can find Wisdom, as long as they look for it with interest. It is a new expression of the typical idea of the Hebrew Bible according to which God is close to those who invoke him, so that everyone who invokes him sincerely finds him (Isaiah 55:6)

(1) Change the word "Wisdom" to "God" in the text. Read again and share thoughts.

(2) The text says: "... *it is the perfection of prudence* ...". One of the cardinal virtues is precisely prudence. Is it the same prudence of the world that teaches us to keep quiet sometimes?

SECOND READING [1 Thessalonians 4 (13-18)]

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

The message of the final judgment and the second coming of Christ (Parousia) had so deeply penetrated the community of Christians in Thessalonica, that the Thessalonians began to worry when they saw that some died before seeing this long-awaited return realized. The Apostle Paul wants serenity to be restored, starting from faith in Jesus who died and risen, seen as the foundation of Christian hope in the resurrection of the dead.

Paul assures that in due time those who have already died will be resurrected, and will lead the parade that will reach heaven, the definitive stay with the Lord. Paul remembers that the destiny of history is in the hands of God and does not depend on human initiative. Paul, as a scholar of the Scriptures, knew of two passages whose images are what he uses to suggest that something like Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2: 1-18) would happen to those who were still alive on the Parousia day. The reading conveys the message that the prospect of the definitive communion of believers with the Lord must invite them to comfort each other and to live with joy and hope.

- (1) If you knew that the end of the world is next week, what changes would you make in your life?
- (2) If you knew that the end of the world is not next week, what would prevent you from making those changes?
- (3) Are you scared by the predictions of Nostradamus or others that speak of the end of the world?
- (4) What do you think the Lord will evaluate in your judgment when you present yourself in his presence? Your piety? Your faith? Your works?
- (5) The first Christians greeted each other with words in Aramaic: Marán Athá, which means: "The Lord is coming." How often do you think of the Parousia?

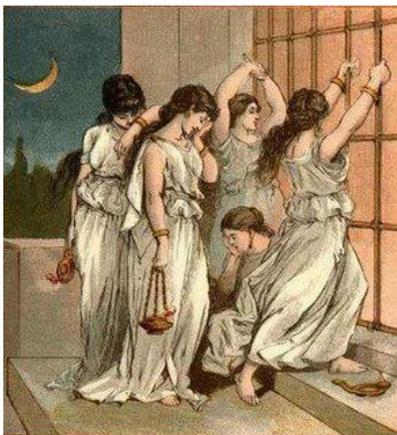
GOSPEL [Matthew 25 (1-13)]

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

""The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.

Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.



At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked.

Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'

Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour. ""

The Gospel of Matthew is composed of five large blocks, each with a different theme. The last of these blocks is found in chapters 24 and 25. It is in this section where we can read the so-called "eschatological discourse", which some also see as a prologue to the Passion narrative. The passage we are studying today is found only in the Gospel of Matthew.

In the time of Jesus, a betrothal took place, and the bride, although already tied to her husband, continued to live with her parents. But on the wedding day, the groom would go to find the bride and take her to live in his house. The bride was accompanied in a kind of procession by the maidens who were chosen from among friends and family. For the reader of Matthew from the 1st century these customs were known and for that reason no explanations are needed. That is also why we see the emphasis placed on the delay of the husband and on the attitude of the young women who are part of the courtship. Nowhere does the bride appear in this parable.

The teaching that Jesus wants to convey is about the foresight that we must have "because we do not know the day or the hour" when the doors of the heavenly banquet will be closed. That is, we must watch. The concern of the believer should not be that of curiosity about the day of the end of the world, but that of living the present time with attention and responsibility.

ESCHATOLOGY: Eschatology is the branch of theology that deals with beliefs or doctrines about the ultimate end of man, humanity or the universe. (Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Last Judgment, Eternal Life)

- (1) Try to remember a time when you missed an invitation from God. Why did you lose it? How do you see it now after time has passed?
- (2) What is "being prepared"? Is it being in the grace of God, having confessed ourselves? Could it be covering up sins of omission? Could it be making peace with those we don't deal with? What other idea can you come up with?
- (3) Has it ever happened to you that you sometimes "fall asleep" in your wakefulness to keep yourself "prepared"?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees may propose their own petitions to God)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we met, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father and of the Son**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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