

**November 8, 2020**  
**Thirty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time**

We often need help to understand the scriptures, which would be true for today's reading from the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter Gospel of Matthew. At first glance, it might seem that the wise virgins are selfish. Why would they not share their oil with the foolish virgins? Does not that go against Jesus' teaching to share with those who are in need and if we want to be perfect, we need to sell all that we have and give it to the poor? We receive that help from God's gift of wisdom, which we heard in the first reading from the book of Wisdom that those "who watch for her will not be disappointed." The wisdom of God can come to us in many ways, through our prayer and reflection as well as from the long history of the Church's preaching and teaching on the scriptures. We are blessed to have the preaching of the early Church Fathers who taught that the oil represents the holiness of their souls. They prepared for the coming of the bridegroom by hearing the word of God and putting it into practice, the teaching that we hear from Jesus in Matthew 7:24. St. Makarios of Egypt says that we are like the five foolish virgins when our hearts are not filled with the spiritual oil of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us that spiritual oil. The oil was not something that the wise virgins give away because each one has to take the responsibility to open their hearts to receive what the Holy Spirit wants to give us in the way that is unique for each person. Then there might be the question, why the bridegroom was not merciful the other brides when the door was locked while they was not were doing all they could to get the oil that they needed? This Gospel is a clear warning to all of us not to test the patience of the Lord. If preparation means not only to receive the oil, that is hear God's word, but also to burn the lamp, that is let the light shine others, which means to put God's word into practice, then that cannot be done in at the last minute. It takes time to be well prepared for the coming of the bridegroom and to enter into his wedding feast. There will be a time

when the door will be locked. Our failure to prepare will have consequences.

We prepare with our time, talent and treasure. Time is the time we give to prayer and meditating on God's word. Talent and treasure is putting God's word into action. Talent means to use the gifts that God has given us for service for building up the common good. We serve the common good by remaining in God's peace when others rant and rave, by showing love when others lash out with hate, by showing forgiveness to others as God has forgiven us. Treasure is recognizing that every material good and financial blessing we have comes from God; all belongs to him and God calls to share with the church and the poor what he has so generously given us. No one can make the decision to be a good steward for us. That is ours alone to make.

Here are some words of wisdom from Pope Francis: "Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is . . . Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you."

Keep your lamp burning. Pray, serve and be as generous as you can be.