

32nd Sunday A

Wisdom 6: 12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18; Mt 25: 1-13

We have just a few weeks left in our liturgical year. Two weeks from now is the Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe, the last Sunday of the liturgical year, followed by the annual Thanksgiving.

We all know, due to health concern, His Excellency Bishop Larry Silva has extended dispensation from Sunday and holy days of obligation until the end of the year. However, many of us come to Mass in any case.

In the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, we are here to celebrate the Eucharist, God's gift to the world. It is a reminder that there is a God and God is here in our midst.

For us, who are here at church and those celebrating from home, rely on God and give God much thought. Spending time with God helps us get through the week, or at least the day.

And the reason we come to Mass is because we want to give thanks to God for all the blessings as well as to be prepared and awake to meet Jesus at the end of our lives.

Like the five virgins in today's Gospel Parable, who were wise enough to bring oil for their lamps to meet the bridegroom. When the time came, they who were prepared rushed out to meet him and accompanied him to the celebration. Likewise, we are to be vigilant and attentive, for we do not know "**neither the day nor the hour.**"

That's exactly what we are doing here today. We are to be ready whenever the Lord may appear before us.

Father Dominic Grassi, a priest and pastor on the north side of Chicago, known for his gift of storytelling shares this story.

A few years back, I celebrated the wedding of a couple in a church in a northern suburb of Chicago. The reception was in a country club in a southern suburb across the metropolitan area.

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Traffic was terrible, and everyone was late arriving. The bride and groom were nowhere to be found. The photographer took pictures of everyone else. The band started to play.

Finally, the couple arrived and were told that if the bridal party didn't immediately sit down and allow the meal to be served, the country club would not be responsible for the quality of the food.

As the couple walked in to applause more than two hours behind schedule, they had no idea that most of us were applauding the serving of the food and not them. This is not unusual for weddings. People who normally are punctual often have a meltdown at a wedding, muttering something about this being "their special" time.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

The time that we have in life is God's gift to us. It is not our time. And it certainly isn't unlimited time. Too often we live like we would be on this planet earth forever. It is only when our time is threatened or comes to an end do we realize how short life is, we wonder, "Where is God?"

We can't figure out why God is absent most of the time, why he doesn't appear before us and fix problems facing us, why He doesn't do anything to get rid of suffering, illnesses, and even death. Does God not care? Is He sort of "bored" with us? Is He too "busy" to be bothered with you and me?

If we're being honest -- we probably all wonder about those things from time to time. That's just a very human thing to do.

In faith, we know that the opposite is true. Our God loved us so much that he came to us as one of us. He walked the journey human beings have walked for millennia. He suffered what men and women suffer. He loved humanity without counting the cost -- even though the price he had to pay was his very life.

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And the amazing thing is that all of those things are still true. They're not things that only happened in the past. They happen in this time and place. In short, our loving God is still with us, walking with us today. God is still communicating to us. God is still trying to encounter us every minute of every day, still trying to "get to us".

Put simply -- God is pursuing us, hunting for us, searching for us, looking for us.

My friends, no one can tell us precisely how to prepare our lives and make ourselves ready to have an intimate encounter with God. Each of us is unique.

Yet, there are some things which seem to be somewhat universal, things that need to be there if we want to meet God continually -- in every moment of every day. These are the things which keep our "lamps lit", keep us ready and prepared. And so, let's keep our lamps lit by, first and foremost, by desire -- that deep longing to meet our God.

Let's keep our lamps lit by attentiveness -- always keeping God in the forefront of our minds. Let's keep our lamps lit by humility and gratitude -- avoiding a sense of entitlement when it comes to God's blessings. Be extremely grateful for the Eucharist, and the time we are being together in Church.

And let's keep our lamps lit by an openness of heart. As Jesus said: "**Keep your eyes open, for you know not the day or the hour**" when he will show up to ask us to escort him into the wedding banquet of heaven.

That way -- we will never miss the encounters of a lifetime. That way -- our oil of love, gratitude and praise will never be empty.

Let us look about this week and see how well we are readying ourselves. May we have much more than just enough and ready to encounter God today and always. Amen.