

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: The wisdom of the Virgins

According to an ancient legend, a sparrow was taking a few drops of water in its beak and dropping them on the house which was on fire. A man was wondering, as to what is the use of these few drops on a big fire. So he spoke to the sparrow, whose reply was quite thought provoking: The sparrow said: "I am also aware of the fact that the few drops which I put on the fire will not put the fire off. But tonight, when I return to my nest, I will have the satisfaction of knowing the fact in my heart, that I was not on the side of those who set fire, but on the side of those who put the fire off". Friends, the point in the story is, not what or how much you do but with what purpose you do something!

As we are coming to the end of the liturgical year, the Church is teaching us how one should be prepared to meet the Lord with the *noble purpose*. Today's all three readings can be summarized into one word, "wisdom".

B&S, the standard of one's life is judged, with the purpose for which one lived his/her life. A life, lived for oneself to fulfill one's own ambitions only, is different from the life, lived for others, or for a noble cause, like religious, national, social causes – for the common good, for the gospel. Today, the Lord is inviting us to live for an important cause: *a wisdom way of living life*. Such a life-style will take you go beyond all the boundaries of religion, culture, language or society.

Wisdom suggests a noble purpose, essential for preparing oneself to meet the Lord. This 'wisdom way' is based on practical knowledge, (prudence and right judgement).

Today's gospel is taken from the last of 5 discourses of Jesus, recorded in St. Mathew, namely the eschatological or 'end-time' discourses. The church invites us today to consider the end of realities, the final things of life; as the gospel reveals the way God imagined the world. It is trying to show us, how the kingdom of God is like, so that we can be prepared for it. We need to draw a few messages from the story of the 10 virgins.

1. The wise virgins were *very practical* in taking extra oil with them, when they went to meet the bridegroom, whereas the foolish virgins did not care to do so. When the purpose is noble, you are well prepared to walk an extra mile. A Christian has to always keep a necessary space between one's personal plans and the plan of God. Humans plan according to 'cronos' = measurable time., but God plans with 'kairos' = graceful time/salvific time.

The return of the Lord will not take place in *cronos*, but in *Kairos*. Hence, *every good Christian has to carry some extra oil of wisdom*, in order to be well prepared and ready to meet the Lord at any hour, even at the *midnight* = that stands for the '*unexpected time*'.

2. The wise virgins were *Foresightedness and Prudent* enough, not to be affected by the mistake made by the foolishness of other virgins. They were firm in going ahead with the noble purpose/task in mind, = "to welcome the bridegroom", and let the foolish virgins handle their own problems.

Friends, what does the 'oil' stand for? It means, the life of Grace; the life in the Holy Spirit! the sacramental life of the church.

Remember, we were anointed with 'oil' at Baptism, at Confirmation; priests' hands are anointed with '*the oil*' during *Ordination*. This refers to the **grace** we received at those moments, which needs to be strengthened, by receiving more through the sacraments of the church, the source of Grace. Running short of 'oil' = is like *running short of grace*, that prevents the entry to the banquet. (the doors were closed before the foolish virgins could get in)

Friends, Lord Jesus, ascended into heaven, to prepare a great banquet for us in his Father's house. But it's up to us, to be *diligent and wise*, during this life, so that we too can assure entry into this banquet! And we pray for that grace today. Amen (Fr. James)