

# Scripture Study

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



## Opening prayer

Wisdom 6:12-16

(Ps 63:2-8)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-16

**Matthew 25:1-13**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- As we get closer to the liturgical season of Advent, the Gospel readings are beginning to stress the themes of *vigilance* and *preparation*. Since last Sunday's gospel, we have skipped over Matthew chapter 24, the so-called "Olivet Discourse" delivered by Jesus on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem. In this discourse, he prepares his disciples for, primarily, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans some 40 years later and, by allegorical extension, prepares all Christians for his Second Coming at the end of time.
- Jewish weddings typically took place in the evening, though the exact time was kept secret. Prior to the ceremony the groom would go to the bride's home and lead her, along with the villagers, in procession to the wedding. The virgins in this story were waiting for the groom and were probably bridesmaids who had the responsibility to prepare the bride to meet the groom, lighting the way with their lamps.
- Christ is often referred to in Scripture as "the Bridegroom" (Mark 2:19-20; John 3:25-30), while the Church is often referred to as his Bride (Revelation 21:2, 9-10; 22:17).
- According to the Church Fathers St. Gregory and St. Augustine, the lamps in this story may stand for "the light of faith", while the oil stands for "the oil of good works".

## Questions:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> reading, for what are we to "keep vigil"? What are the rewards for doing so?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, St. Paul refers to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time when all who are in Christ (beginning with those Christians who have left this life before us) will be caught up to be with him in heaven forever. Why should these words bring us comfort?
- How does the parable in the Gospel relate to Matthew 24? To the coming Advent season?
- In what way were the ten girls alike? How were they different? What unexpected event takes place (verses 5-6)? With what embarrassing consequence (verse 8)?
- Why is vigilance and personal readiness so important to Jesus' listeners? In regard to the end of each of our lives? To the Second Coming?
- Who are you most like in this story? Why?
- What is the "oil" that keeps your "lamp" lit? How can you keep it replenished?
- At the final wedding banquet (Revelation 19:6-9; 21:2-4), which side of the door will you be standing? Why?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 672, 796**

## Closing prayer

*Watch with the heart, watch with faith, watch with love, watch with charity, watch with good works...make ready the lamps, make sure they do not go out...renew them with the inner oil of an upright conscience; then shall the Bridegroom enfold you in the embrace of his love and bring you into his banquet room, where your lamp can never be extinguished. –St. Augustine*

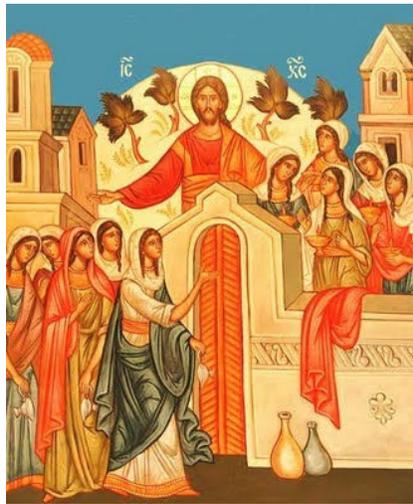
**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# The foolish will miss heaven's wedding feast

**Scripture:** *Matthew 25:1-13*

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

**Meditation:** Are you missing out on what's most important in life? Being unprepared can lead to unnecessary trouble and even disaster! What good is a life-jacket left on the shore when the boat is sinking? Jesus' story of ten single ladies waiting for a wedding procession in the middle of the night seems strange to most westerners today. But Jesus' audience knew all too well how



easily this could happen to them. Wedding customs in ancient Palestine required extra vigilance and preparation for everyone involved. (Some near eastern villages still follow this custom.) The bride and groom did not go away for their honeymoon, but celebrated for a whole week with their family and friends. It was the custom for the groom, in company with his friends, to come at his discretion and get his bride and bring her to their new home. They would take the longest route possible so that many villagers along the way could join in the wedding procession. Once they arrived and closed the doors, no one else could be admitted. If the groom decided to come and bring his bride at night, then lights were required by necessity to guide the travelers through the dark and narrow streets. No one was allowed on the village streets at night without a lamp! To show up for a wedding party without proper attire and travel arrangements is like trying to get into a special event today that requires a prearranged permit or

reservation. You just don't get in without the proper pass. Can you imagine the frustration travelers might experience when going abroad and finding out that they can't get into some country because they don't have the right visa or a valid passport.

Jesus warns us that there are consequences for being unprepared. There are certain things you cannot obtain at the last moment. For example, students cannot prepare for their exams when the day of testing is already upon them. A person cannot get the right kind of character, strength, and skill required for a task at hand unless they already possess it, such as a captain with courage and nautical skills who must steer a ship through a dangerous storm at sea. When the Lord Jesus comes to lead you to his heavenly banquet will you be ready to hear his voice and follow? Our eternal welfare depends on our hearing, and many have trained themselves to not hear. We will not be prepared to meet the Lord, face to face, when he calls us on the Day of Judgment, unless we listen to him today. The Lord invites us to feast at his heavenly banquet table. Are you ready?

*"Lord Jesus, make me vigilant and attentive to your voice that I may heed your call at all times. May I find joy in your presence and delight in doing your will."*

**Meditation:** © 2011 Don Schwager  
*Daily Scripture Readings and Meditations*  
[www.rc.net/wcc/readings/](http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/)