



Bible Study Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time A

St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes

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“Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” Matt: 25: 12-13 NABRE

Reading I: Wisdom 6:12-16

KEEP THE LIGHT ON. In this modern materialistic world, we are often too busy to think about the “end of the world.” Remember the “Millennium”? Great calamities, financial failures, and destruction were predicted when the year turned from 1999 to 2000. Some thought this would be the end of the world. It was considered wise to prepare just in case 1999 was the end time. Now that we are in 2017, we seem to have gotten over the “millennium craze” and ceased preparation. Is that wise? This reading raises the same question.

Written between 150 B.C. and 50 B.C., the Book of Wisdom’s primary purpose was the enlightenment of religious leaders in a time when they experienced oppression and suffering. The author is unknown, but is presumed to be a member



The oil in your lamp
is the Holy Spirit of
God.

of the Jewish community in Alexandria Egypt who takes on the persona of the wise King Solomon. These verses from the Book of Wisdom come from the conclusion of the first part of the book. The theme for that part of the book is that wisdom is the entrance to immortality. Those who seek wisdom will acquire something that survives the last judgment.

The “Woman Wisdom” is the image of God. The verses in this reading celebrate the quest for wisdom for its own sake. Wisdom is personified here the same as in Proverbs, Job, Baruch and Sirach. Wisdom is not a person separate from God. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit and here it is a literary personification of one of God’s attributes. He is permanent and always near (v12). He is the light of the world. Wisdom is also portrayed as a virtue given to all who seek and desire it. Even before we seek wisdom, it seeks us. Wisdom helps us to see light in the dark places of this world. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** What would help us see the world as God sees it? Compare Wisdom 6:16 with Matthew 25:13. How does Wisdom help us prepare for the end times.

Wisdom

The word “Wisdom”, or to be wise is a moral rather than an intellectual quality. Scripture often portrays a “foolish” person as a godless person. ([Ps 14:1](#); comp. [Judg 19:23](#); [2 Sam 13:13](#)). The readings for this Sunday confirm that true wisdom is a gift from God and is given to those who ask for it. ([Job 28:12-28](#); [Prov 3:13-18](#); [Rom 1:22](#); [16:27](#); [1 Cor 1:17-21](#); [2:6-8](#); [James 1:5](#)). “Wisdom” in [Prov 1:20](#); [8:1](#); [9:1-5](#) may be regarded not as a mere personification of the attribute of wisdom, but as a divine person, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” ([1 Cor 1:24](#)). In [Matt 11:19](#) it is the personified principle of wisdom that is meant. Do you see a comparison to the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. 25:1-13? Note that the “Book of Wisdom was written in Greek and excluded from the Jewish Canon.

Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

KEEP THE LIGHTS ON. First Thessalonians is a personal letter from St. Paul that commends the Thessalonians for their Christian conduct. (See 1:1-19) This letter also encourages them to build up one another in faith and prepare spiritually for the second coming of Christ. St. Paul emphasizes the need to develop sound moral character in faith, love, and hope, so that they would live faithfully in the expectation of the Lord Jesus’ second coming. The readings for this Sunday are part of St. Paul’s specific exhortations or encouragements for Thessalonians in the areas of: holiness in sexual conduct, mutual charity, hope for the Christian dead, vigilance, and church order. The entire letter encourages them to keep the light of wisdom, which is the Lord, burning and to live in hope (v.13).

Verses 13-18 address their concern over the second coming. Because they thought that the second coming was imminent, St. Paul reminded them that the living will have no advantage over the dead, because they were all baptized in Christ. He tells them to keep the light of Christ burning within them as they will be snatched up on the last day (v.17). **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What hope do you have for Christians who have died before the second coming of Christ?

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

KEEP THE LIGHT ON. Some say that luck is preparation meeting opportunity. Others profess that it is better to be the most prepared in the room than the smartest. As Christians, we are encouraged to live each DAY as though it is our last. Perhaps this is why we pray, "...give us this day..." in the Lord's Prayer. As we conclude this liturgical year, the church focuses on the end times. As we do so, it is helpful to recall whether we have maintained the light of Christmas in us through the year? Are we better prepared to meet the Lord this year than we were last year? In this world of nuclear threats, mass murders, terrorist attacks, racial injustice, and political instability, it is wise to keep the light of Christ burning brightly in us so we do not lose hope. It is wise to keep the light on.

The image of the parable of the virgins is a strong one and can be viewed on at least three levels. Spiritual independence and preparation are underlying themes of this gospel. Jesus uses this parable to urge the disciples and us to make wise preparations for the coming of Christ and His Kingdom. This parable can be viewed as an "allegory," that is, a story with a hidden moral teaching. The bridegroom is Jesus (Matt. 9:15). The virgins represent the Christian community. They prepare their lamps for the groom and his bride. This part of the parable may be lost on the modern reader since the image is of marriage in first century Palestine. The image here is that the disciples, and all of us, have been called to play special roles in the nuptials of Christ with His Church. However, we can forfeit that place at the eternal nuptials in heaven through carelessness and neglect, and not necessarily by willful misconduct.

In first century Palestine, a wedding among Jews lasted about a week and usually took place at the bridegroom's home. He, accompanied by his friends and relatives, came to the bride's house about sunset, but at no particular time. After receiving the bride, the groom, bride and those attending the bride and groom walked in festive procession to the home of the groom, where a feast was prepared. In some instances, those attending the feast contributed food, flower and such to the wedding celebration. Recall Mary and Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana. (Jn. 2:1-12) The virgins contributed their time, lamps and oil. Yet, some of them were not considered worthy of entering the banquet feast. Of the ten virgins in the parable, five were wise, because they were prepared and brought oil for their lamps. Five and five were foolish, because they did not. As a sign of the need for individual spiritual preparation, the wise did not share their oil with the foolish virgins who were rejected by the bridegroom. With no oil they could not keep their lights on. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Was it wrong for the five wise virgins not to share their oil with the foolish ones?

Pray About It.

Monday

Read verse 6:13. Ask God for His vision of this world.

Tuesday

Attend Mass today. Write down the names of some Christians who have died. Remember them in prayer.

Wednesday

Read Thes. 4:13-18. How are you preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

Thursday

Read Matt: 19:12. Pray for religious men and women who dedicated themselves to a life of celibacy.

Friday

Read Matt 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12. Perform acts of kindness to family members, coworkers, and strangers.

THE RAPTURE

What does the rapture really mean? Many fundamentalists interpret Thes. 4:12-18 literally as a description of the so-called rapture. They take these verses as a prediction of what will take place on Judgment day. They believe in literally being "snatched up" in Christian glory. Some have developed elaborate schemes to describe the thousand-year reign of Christ (Rev.20:4-7) preceded by the recapture and seven years of tribulation. Catholics and others reject this literal reading. Rather, St. Paul uses stock apocalyptic imagery to describe the **mystery** of how the judgment will take place. In 5:1-3 he warns the Thessalonians not to speculate too much on such details because God alone controls them. *Little Rock Study Bible*, Little Rock Scripture Study, 2001, Little Rock Ark. The Rapture p. 2437

Resources: The Sunday Readings Cycle A Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press 1971, P381. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri ©2001, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids Mi. p.319.; Wisdom: Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.; 1 Thessalonians, Ivan Havener, O.S.B. ; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1151-1159; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2014, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. Pp246-246; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

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