

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - A

The parable we just heard in the Gospel is the familiar story of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. The defining factor that sets them apart is wisdom, which the dictionary defines it as “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise.” Ok, so we can see how 5 of the 10 bridesmaids were not wise – they were not prepared for the long wait for the bridegroom, they failed to use their good judgment. But it would seem that wisdom is more than just knowledge and judgment. In the First Reading, Wisdom is personified; She is described as a woman who is always attentive to those who seek her; Wisdom is Someone who gently instructs those who follow her; Someone who is there to guide us in our difficulties; Someone who does not hide from those who ardently seek her. There is something more to wisdom than just impersonal experience and knowledge - Wisdom is one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit – To be wise therefore is to have the mind of the Holy Spirit; to think as He does, to know as He does, to make judgments as He does.

In our Gospel, those who were not wise were caught off guard and unprepared to greet the bridegroom. So having wisdom means that we live in a constant state of awareness and readiness to meet the Lord. I don't think that God wants us to live in suspense and on edge always worried about when he is going to come. God is not like an undercover cop who is trying to trick us or catch us at a bad time. If we are truly wise, if we have the mind of the Holy Spirit, then our entire life will be lived in and through the Holy Spirit. We need not worry about the future and the coming of God if we are already living with Him and according to his Word. From our human perspective, the Lord's coming seems uncertain, but from our Lord's perspective, there is nothing uncertain about it at all – it will happen according to his Will. If we are wise, then we will begin to see his Will more easily, and know his ways more personally. And this should bring us comfort.

St. Paul describes the second coming, and to those who are not ready, it will be a fearful time. The Lord will come with a cry of command, the Archangel's call, and the sound of the trumpet. The calls to mind the coming of God on Mount Sinai when the Lord descended upon the mountain with a fiery cloud and blaring trumpet, and all the Israelites went out to meet him. When our Lord comes again, he will descend as he ascended, in a glorious cloud. To someone who is not familiar with the Lord's ways, his coming will be a frightful time; but to someone who is wise, this will be a time of great rejoicing to greet the Lord when he comes.

So we can begin to see the difference between someone who is wise, and someone who is foolish – It's not just experience or lack of; it's not just making good decisions, or making poor decisions; but to be wise is to be transformed in the Lord. Psalm 14 says that "The foolish person has said in his heart, there is no God." The foolish person does not know God, does not live according to God's ways, does not recognize God's works. And so, of course, someone who is not living in God and with God will always be fearful of the final reckoning in which we all have to give an account. Compare this to the wise person, who lives in God each day; there is no fear of the Lord's coming because they are already living with him each day. Our Lord and his ways are familiar to those who are wise, and they have nothing to fear when he comes.

The lesson here is this: if you are baptized and confirmed, then you already have the Holy Spirit's gifts, including wisdom. How are we using it in our lives? How does it shape the decisions we make each day? The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not "magical" - they are from God, so they only work in a person who strives to live their life according to God's law and has a devout prayer life; someone who strives to live through Him, with Him, and in Him each day. And if we do this, then we will always be prepared to meet the Lord. The Saints never had a fear of death, of meeting the Lord, because they were so immersed in Him in this life, that they were always ready to encounter Him in death. The transition from their earthly life to the heavenly life was not unfamiliar or strange because they knew God so well. This is what we all must strive for as well: to know God in this world, to be immersed in him in this life, so that we can say with the psalmist "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Because your steadfast love is better than life, I will lift up my hands and call on your name; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy."